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Bradford

7



THE GROWING REVELATION.

THE
GROWING REVELATION

BY

Amory H. Bradford,

*Author of "Heredity and Christian Problems," "Spirit and Life,"
"The Pilgrim in Old England," &c.*

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—
1897.

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ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS.
1897.

TO THE
FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF MONTCLAIR, N.J.,
THE SERVICE OF WHICH HAS BEEN MY CONTINUAL
JOY, AND WHOSE APPRECIATION AND LOVE
ARE MORE PRECIOUS THAN RUBIES.

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PREFACE.

THIS book is chiefly composed of sermons preached first in the church of which I am pastor, and afterward in Westminster Chapel and Kensington Congregational Church in London, in Carr's Lane Chapel in Birmingham, and in various other churches in England.

The mention of the fact that most of these sermons were heard in England with extreme courtesy is not to be interpreted as a claim on my part that the views here presented have the endorsement of the churches in which they were delivered. All that I know is that they were received with apparent hospitality.

These sermons were not prepared as part of a series, but they are here gathered because they are believed truly, though very inadequately, to illustrate some phases of The Growing Revelation.

AMORY H. BRADFORD.

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH,
Montclair, N.J.

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PROLOGUE.

THEOLOGICAL THOUGHT TO-DAY.

THEOLOGY is "the endless study."

It is now more nearly universal than ever before, and quite as earnest and profound.

There is a Growing Revelation.

Formerly inquiry began with God and came down to man; now it begins with man and rises toward God: first that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual.

Theology formerly was the monopoly of the Church and the schools; now every man who thinks makes his creed for himself. This may be a sign of progress and it may not, but it is a fact.

Theology to-day is of two kinds: traditional and independent. The traditional clings to old forms and phrases, emphasizes authority, and is trying to believe that thought concerning God, salvation, duty, destiny, has undergone no substantial change; the independent asks only for realities; it does not break with the past, yet often refuses to be bound by its conclusions. The traditional asks what others have

held ; the independent asks only what is true in the light of to-day. There may be a middle ground, and possibly the truth lies hidden there.

The traditionalists are still the more numerous, but the independents are more scholarly and influential.

The traditionalists face the past ; the independents face the future.

The theology of to-day is incapable of strict definition, since it has almost as many forms as there are thinkers. This is as it should be, because the Spirit in His operations always recognises individuality.

Some are occupied with problems of Biblical Criticism ;

Others see in Evolution an adequate explanation of the development of the individual and of human history ;

Others interpret all mysteries by the Divine Fatherhood ;

Others cry "back to Christ," and insist that the Great Teacher be regarded as the ultimate authority on spiritual subjects ; but with one and all the desire is for reality, all uniting in the faith that men are spirits ; that they are immortal ; that they are in a moral order ; and that the grace of God as manifested in Jesus Christ is the heart of the Gospel, and must be the central and governing truth of the final religion.

The theology of to-day is not chiefly occupied with speculations concerning the person of Christ :

It is more anxious to know what He taught than who He was ;

It believes Him to have been in a unique sense Divine, because He satisfies that which is nearest Divine in man ;

It is not so anxious to know who wrote the Bible as to know what the Bible makes of those who read it ;

It believes in the Divine in man—therefore is humanitarian ;

It believes in the omnipotence of love—therefore does not believe that God can for ever be defeated ;

It believes in the fact of sin ; that it is an awful thing to be a sinner ; that he who lives in sin lives in hell, and must continue there so long as he sins ;

It believes that as the stars rest in the spaces, so all men, all nations, all worlds, are enfolded for ever in the sacrificial love, and that life, death, judgment, and eternity are in the hands which were pierced.

Theology to-day does not make strong affirmations concerning what lies beyond the grave ; it believes in “the Father Almighty,” and leaves the future with Him.

Theology may, perhaps, be said to be occupied most with an attempt to grasp the inner

life of the historic Christ, and to bring it into vital contact with the heart and will of man.

The theology of to-day is earnest, reverent, and constructive ; it studies carefully the Growing Revelation ;

It believes in God ;

It believes in God immanent in nature and history, and revealed through both ;

It believes in God revealed in Jesus Christ ;

It believes in "the Eternal Atonement" ;

It believes in the continuous ministry of the Holy Ghost ;

It believes in human freedom and responsibility ;

It believes that whatsoever a man soweth that shall he reap ;

It believes in the forgiveness of sins ;

It believes in the immortal life ;

It believes that God is the goal of humanity and history as He was also their beginning.

I.

THE VISION OF GOD.

I.

THE VISION OF GOD.

“In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord.”
ISAIAH vi. 1.

THE striking way in which this chapter begins is probably the result of the vivid and awful experience through which the prophet passed when Uzziah died. That king had lifted the nation to almost unexampled prosperity and splendour. He was the nation’s idol, and no doubt seemed peculiarly heroic to a sensitive and patriotic youth like Isaiah. The story is briefly told: “The Lord smote the king so that he was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a several house, and he was cut off from the house of the Lord.” “Uzziah had gone into the temple and attempted with his own hands to burn incense. Under a later dispensation of liberty he would have been applauded as a brave Protestant, vindicating the right of every worshipper of God to approach Him without the intervention of a special priesthood. Under the earlier dispensation of law his act could be regarded only as one of presumption. . . . It was followed, as all sins of wilfulness in religion under the

old covenant, by swift disaster. . . . The wrath with which he burst out on the opposing priests brought on, or made evident, as it is believed to have done in other cases, an attack of leprosy. The white spot stood out unmistakably from the flushed forehead, and he was thrust from the temple—yea, *himself also hasted to go out.*** That sudden, swift eclipse of one of the kingliest spirits who ever sat upon a throne was the experience which brought Isaiah to himself and gave him a glimpse of eternal realities. The imagery of the chapter is all suggested by the temple, but the vision reaches beyond the temple to the palace of heaven and the throne of God. This was the call of Isaiah to his immortal ministry. No one is ever fitted to serve man until he has had a vision of God. We leave the details of this magnificent and inspiring event and come at once to the startling fact with which the prophet begins—“I saw the Lord.”

“No man hath seen God at any time,” says the Apostle, and yet the prophet says that he saw Him—which speaks the truth? Is it possible to see the Infinite? We say God is infinite; that is, He is without limitations. In the nature of things that which has no limitations can be neither seen nor known. Others have

* The Book of Isaiah. George Adam Smith, M.A. Vol. I., p. 59, 60.

spoken of seeing God. Moses on Mount Sinai saw His back as the glory swept by. Samuel and Elijah are declared to have heard His voice. The Saviour says, "The pure in heart shall see God," and Moses said that if a man were to see Him he would die. These seem to be contradictions, and yet they are not. One class of passages refers to the spiritual sense, and the other to the physical. No one ever saw God, and yet Moses and Isaiah saw Him, and Samuel and Elijah heard His voice. As mountains and oceans are seen, God has never been seen. The Being who lighted the morning stars, who existed before the primeval ether was "fanned by angels' wings," who holds in His hands galaxies of worlds, and whose years have no end, will probably never be seen in form and person, even when the spirit is freed from the flesh. And yet according to Scripture He may be both seen and known. Isaiah had a vision—something like a dream, possibly really a dream—in which the Deity seemed present. It was so vivid that it marked an epoch in his life and teachings. He not only saw God, but some of the beings who dwell near to Him. They are called seraphim, or living ones. They cried one to another, while they shaded their faces in the insufferable light: "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory." The prophet with the eyes of his spirit saw God as never before. He was as sure of

Him as of friends in the flesh; he could no longer doubt that all men and nations were in the Divine hands. In that supernal light all things were made new. This fact is our starting-point.

Isaiah saw God. Do men see Him to-day? Was He any nearer to Jerusalem than He is to London and New York? Did that old Hebrew possess faculties different from ours? Can we see and know God? I have studied this question long and earnestly, pondered it with the light which seemed streaming from beyond the grave falling around me, sought answers to it from many persons whose opinion I valued as I have travelled in many lands; and I affirm my belief that it is the teaching both of Scripture and of experience that God can be seen and known. Moses, Isaiah, Elijah, Paul, John, all profess to have seen Him, and millions of others less conspicuous have borne credible testimony to the same faith.

Is the vision of God a reality, or only a dream? In answering this question we must be careful of our definitions. What do we mean by seeing and knowing God? A spirit cannot be seen with physical eyes. We mean that we are so convinced of the reality of God that our thinking and living are determined by that conviction; so sure of Him that we live as if we saw Him by physical sight. Without

trying to prove anything, observe that many of the wisest, purest, and least likely to be deceived of all time have had this faith—a faith so firm that it has transformed and transfigured life, and been held in face of loss and death.

Abraham was called “the friend of God”; Moses is represented as talking with God and seeing His glory in the mount; Joshua received messages from Jehovah, as did also Samuel and David. A voice whispered in the ear of Elijah which was not a voice of man. Paul in a vision was called to be an apostle by the ascended Lord, and John on Patmos beheld heaven opened, and saw with the eyes of His spirit the great white throne and Him that sat thereon. These men may have been mistaken, but at least we may say they were honest. In heathen lands, so-called, there has been the same experience. A Presbyterian missionary in China, on a visit to his home in the United States, was asked: “Who taught you most of God of any one whom you ever knew?” His answer was: “Once in China I became depressed because of my spiritual condition; I went into the mountains to be alone to meditate and pray; but my darkness increased until in those solitudes I met a Buddhist monk whose home was there, and he taught me more of God than any man whom I ever knew.” A Christian missionary taught about God by a Buddhist

monk! Yes, just that, if the missionary may be believed. That fact should occasion no surprise. God reveals Himself wherever He finds an open heart. That there have been a few such revelations even in heathenism the Bible teaches in the examples of Job, Balaam, and Melchizedek. It is impossible to read the lives of Zoroaster and Socrates, of "seekers after God" like Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, without believing that they were dimly yet really seers as well as seekers. In later times there have been similar examples. That astronomer who said that he was only thinking God's thoughts after Him could not have been entirely ignorant of Him. He who insisted to his death that all species were the direct creation of the Almighty must have had some vision of Him.* The scientists seem to have been as firm in their faith as the prophets. God's prophets have not all been Hebrews. He has appeared to men in all ages who have taken the Psalmist at his word, "The heavens declare the glory of God." What sermons must have been preached to some souls beneath the splendid skies of Chaldea and in the shadows of the awful mountains of Thibet! Moses saw God's glory on Sinai; David saw it in the heavens; Agazziz saw it in the marvellous order of organic creation. Let any one hear St. Augustine in his Confessions crying: "Too

* Louis Agazziz.

late I loved thee, O thou beauty of ancient days!" or read those writings of Jonathan Edwards, in which he insists that the Divine Spirit comes into personal contact with the human spirit, and he must feel that those men saw themselves in contrast with another, who was as high above them as the heavens are above the earth.

Ideas about God have differed; but in all lands and ages some have been sure of His existence and of His attributes. These have not been sentimentalists but sages. And almost all have had some such experience as Isaiah. Pascal had it when, returning from a midnight dissipation, his carriage halted on the brink of a precipice. Cowper had it when his coachman baffled his intention to commit suicide. Bushnell had it when in the darkness of night he awoke and cried: "I have found it! I have found it!—the Gospel!" Frederick Robertson had it when in utter spiritual despair, thinking he was in the outer darkness, he cried: "Only this I know—he who loves justice loves God; he who loves truth loves God; he who loves goodness loves God." Our martyr-President had it when, in that long, black night before Antietam, he promised God that if the Confederates were driven back the slaves should be freed.* And Mrs. Browning had the same vision when she

* Carpenter's "Six Months at the White House," p. 90.

wrote those words which throb with heavenly music :

And I smiled to think God's greatness flows around
our incompleteness—
Round our restlessness, His rest.*

It has not been proved thus far that any have actually seen God. In the nature of things that would be impossible. But it has been proved that those whom all trust when they speak concerning other things have believed that they have had this vision, and that faith has been the inspiration of dauntless heroism, patient endurance, and sacrificing service.

How is God known? Many answers are given. Probably all are partially correct. As each individual sees natural objects from his own standpoint, so must he approach the highest knowledge. We are not asking whether men have known about God, but whether they have known Him. We know about Cæsar, but we do not know him ; we know about the Mikado of Japan, but we do not know him. Many know about God who show no signs of knowing Him.

Searching questions come to us here. Is it possible to know a Being who cannot be seen and who never has been seen with physical sight? Can He be known who is so great that no one can imagine how great He is? Is there such a thing as a personal communion between

* Rhyme of the Duchess May.

God and man, so that we may know the Heavenly Father as a child may know his earthly father without adequate appreciation of his powers? This experience of God has been explained in different ways. Some say that as we are conscious of ourselves so we know God; that as we have self-consciousness so we have God-consciousness. The idea is difficult for some to grasp, but it has been the inspiration of many of the world's greatest thinkers.

Others reply that they see God intuitively, that is, by looking into their own minds and hearts. An illustration of this thought is the idea of space. No one ever saw space, and yet it is a necessary thought. So, while we do not see God with the physical but with the mind's eye, He is as necessary to thought as space.

I once put this question about knowing God to a profound theologian. Closer and closer the inquiry was pushed—Do you know God as distinct from knowing about Him? He finally replied: "You are getting down pretty deep. I must confess that my knowledge is not direct and personal, but the result of an intellectual process."

Others say that they know God in Jesus Christ; but do they mean that the God living to-day is known in Jesus Christ living to-day? Usually the thought is that Jesus Christ who died nineteen hundred years ago when He was on the earth revealed God. That is gloriously

true, but it is knowing what He taught about the Deity and not personal acquaintance. Jesus knew God intimately. He was the typical man, and therefore it may be assumed that men may have the same acquaintance with the living God that Jesus had when He said, "I and the Father are one," for that means not simply oneness in personality but in spirit.

Many of the world's purest and wisest have believed themselves to be in union with God, and yet no one has been able to tell how this experience was attained. Some say, "We are conscious of Him"; others, "We see Him with the inner eye"; others, "Reason leads to Him"; and others still, "He is seen and known in the things which are made." But, after all, the most that any can say is, "I know Him." Isaiah said, "I saw the Lord," but beyond that all is hazy and indistinct. He was high and lifted up, and His glory filled the temple, and the living ones cried, "Holy, holy," but that is all. If we were speaking of physical rather than spiritual experiences this answer would be unsatisfactory, but one spirit often recognises and becomes acquainted with another spirit when the physical senses have played no part. As one recognises kinship in another when a noble action is performed though the doer of it is never seen, so God is recognised by our spirits, in His providences, in still hours, in the things which He

has made, in the sacrifices of His children. We have never seen Him, but we feel our dependence, and the feeling of dependence points toward a higher personality. Everything in life has been ordered for our good; sorrows have made us sympathetic; losses uncovered truer riches; humiliations lifted us to heights of vision. The calamities which seemed unendurable have been borne triumphantly. The fortune went, but the heart did not faint; a friend was unfaithful, but the spirit was unbroken; a severe sickness changed all our plans, and we are adjusted to new conditions. Now if we know ourselves as dependent on One above us, and have proved that His plans for us are good, do we not know Him, and know Him as good? If I had never seen you, yet if in an emergency you had put your credit at my service; if, when my life was hanging by a thread, you had sent me the care I needed; if, when I was alone, you had provided me with companionship and asked nothing in return—do you think I should say I never knew you? “Do you know Mr. A.?” “Yes.” “How does he look?” “I never saw him.” “How, then, do you know him?” “Know him! Why, for ten years that man has not ceased to do me favours. I should have failed in business but for him; I should have died but for him. I know him.” And some one asks, “Do you know God?” “I do.” “Did you

ever see Him?" "No." "How, then, can you say you know Him?" "Well, I was all alone in the world, discouraged and broken-hearted, when suddenly, from somewhere, strength and courage came. I was held in an evil habit stronger than chains of steel, and when I was ready to give up I was shown a way by which I escaped. I have had sorrows which no man could bear alone, and I have borne them and rejoiced under them. And I tell you I know God because of what He has been and is to me." Spirits may be well acquainted with spirits when to bodily sight there is no recognition. We know God just as a child knows his mother. How is that? Did that little one ever see his mother? No. Those little hands touch cheeks that some day will grow cold; those little eyes look into eyes that some time will close never to open; they see a form, but the love that makes that frail body tireless, that makes those white arms a halo for that little head, the child never saw with the physical eye. He knows his mother, and no knowledge was ever surer or more beautiful; and yet the child knows the real mother who watches, prays, loves, and will not faint, in the same way that we know God—by love manifesting itself through the physical media, and, may we not believe, along impalpable spiritual media? This consciousness is, of course, a growth. It is dim at first, and hardly recog-

nised, but gradually it becomes more distinct, and yet it must be observed that many are really conscious of God without knowing that He is God.

God is a Spirit. Human spirits recognise Him by what He does, just as an infant recognises his mother upon whose essential nature he will never look. God is not seen by the sense, but with the spirit. When we want to know *about* God we stand before the majesty of the ocean in a storm, before the terrible splendour of Alpine crests and glaciers, beneath the host of the heavens that in solemn silence thread the mazes of the sky, and say, “Behold the *greatness* of God!” We study the movement of history—see how the dispersion of the Jews sent spiritual ideas into all lands; how the triumphs of Alexander gave to the world a common language; how the supremacy of Rome made nations one; how the carnival of blood called the “French Revolution” overthrew more abuses than it worked; how the American Civil War ended in the proclamation of freedom—and we say, God reveals Himself in *history*. We read of the life and death of Jesus, and find in that supreme manifestation of God the One for whom our souls long. But all these revelations may be accepted without personal knowledge. The Father who is a Spirit communes with His child in spirit; speaks in a still voice in the chambers of

memory, conscience, aspiration ; and we know Him, and yet are never able to explain the mystery to another. “ We are all at one in the conviction that the inner life of religion is a secret in the soul, and cannot be handed over from one to another.”* “ I know my Father ; He knows His child”—that is the highest human experience. That is eternal life.

If eternal life is not a question of dates, of the succession of months and years, but knowing God, then no question is more imperative than, Is it possible for me to know Him ? It is a great thing to claim that knowledge. It should never be done irreverently or lightly, but always humbly and with great joy. The mission of the pulpit and of the Church is first to help men to know God. If a minister does not make God more real to some soul he is failing in his ministry. Many are working for the poor and the intemperate, and seeking to improve the human condition, but if they stop there and leave their fellow-men as ignorant as ever of God, they only prepare them to realise more keenly their misery. Cease not to minister to those who are going to destruction soul and body, but never forget that missions, coffee-houses, and clubs for men and boys should be only stepping-stones to the knowledge of God which is life eternal. Without that men are

* “ Communion with God,” Herrmann, p. 17.

lifted to heights from which they will quickly fall to more terrible abysses. Give all your life for God in humanity, but do not fail to make plain the way in which the poorest and vilest may realise that they are the sons and daughters of the King. This is the noblest service. To enter this ministry there is needed no touch of bishop's hands ; he who knows God has in that knowledge a Divine ordination to preach. Do you know God ? I beg you tell me all you know ; you can do me no greater favour. Do I know Him ? Let me tell you how in disappointment, pain, sickness, under the shadow of death, He has revealed Himself in those silences when only still voices speak.

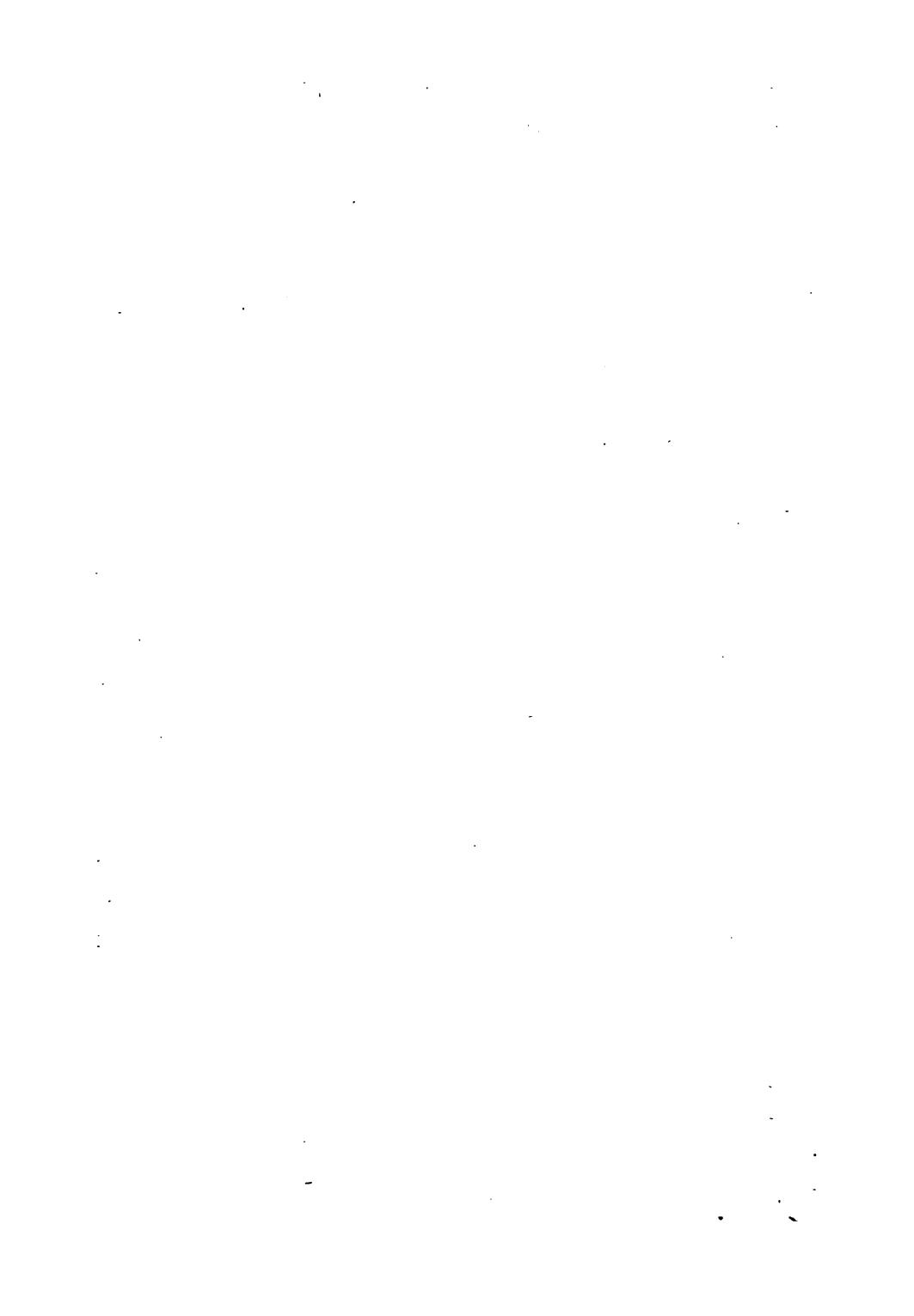
When I see partisans in God's name working to build sects, begging money to erect churches which will be monuments of hate ; speaking bitter words ; spending weeks and months in contention over forms and theories which no one understands ; when I see puny men upholding one system of theology and denouncing another, as if He whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain could be tucked away in the syllogisms of their little schools ; when I see others more anxious to be rich than to be right, to be great than to be good, to assert their rights than to feed the poor and sympathise with the afflicted—I feel that there is one thing more important than all others combined for those who know God, and that is, to devote

all their energies to helping others to know Him, for "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." If all knew God as only friend can know friend, cruelty and injustice, impurity, discord, and whatsoever loveth and maketh a lie, would no more be known among men; and truth, fidelity, and love would fill all hearts and abide for ever. "Whosoever loveth is born of God, and knoweth God."

How, then, may we acquire this supreme knowledge? Many answers are possible, but only one need be given. All who follow Jesus Christ sooner or later will realise that, like Him, they, too, are sons of God. How the acquaintance is perfected no man can explain, but all who walk in the royal way of the holy cross, as surely as the day succeeds the night are made like Him whom they follow, until with Him they can say as the door of opportunity opens, "Father . . . Thy kingdom come," and as the door of opportunity closes, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit." By following Jesus Christ men are led to God—that is all we know, and all we need to know.

II.

**INTERPRET GOD BY HIS
FATHERHOOD.**



II.

INTERPRET GOD BY HIS FATHERHOOD.

"But to us there is but one God, the Father."
1 Cor. viii. 6.

THE greatest question in the sphere of pure thought is, Does God exist? The next in importance is, If He exists, what is He like? The former has never been long unasked, and when asked, the second has never failed to follow. This study has nothing to do with the former question. On no other theory than that of His existence can one of the problems of light or thought be explained. If there is no God there is no purpose, no meaning in anything, and the universe flashes in its lights, speaks in its voices, and sings in its harmony, an infinite and eternal lie. No God—then there is nothing but blackness of darkness everywhere and for ever. There was never a truer word spoken than "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God."

Of hardly less importance is the second question—What is God like? Upon the answer to that depends all comfort for the present and all hope for the future. If He is only a King like earthly kings, an infinite Autocrat, it would be

as well if there were no God. An empty throne is better than a king with no heart. If the idea of God is that of absolute will—cold, remorseless, universal, immortal, life will be fatalistic and pessimistic. Pessimism and fatalism are common where the kingliness of Deity is emphasized. If the conception of God is that of a big man, with human passions and frailties, then passion and sensuality will prevail. The voluptuous life of Corinth, Athens, and the East was only the reflection of the deities whom the people worshipped. Where Jupiter was god men were warlike and cruel; where Venus was goddess women were lewd and men licentious; where a cruel divinity has been adored human sacrifices have been offered, as among the Druids. Man always reflects his idea of God. A city or a state never rises above the faith of its people.

Jesus Christ assumed the existence of God. He gave two ways by which His character might be known. He said, "I and the Father are one." He said again, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." God is like Jesus Christ. That is the message of Christianity. But is there no other way by which the Scriptural teaching about God may be interpreted? Is there no key to the doctrine of God? Suppose a man from a remote star were to land on our planet, and we were desirous of comparing notes with him about God, what would we tell

him was the teaching of our sacred books on that subject? Let us seek an answer to that question. In doing so we will confine our inquiry to the New Testament, not because it in any way conflicts with the Old, but because in the Old we have that which is partial, while in Jesus Christ we have that which is universal. Is there any word which Jesus applies to God which answers the inquiry, What is God like? He often speaks of the kingdom of God, but seldom of the King. There are references to the kingdom, but, as in the Lord's Prayer, it is almost always to the Father's kingdom. The prayer begins "Our Father," and continues "Thy kingdom come." In a few places God is called "light," "love," but such characterisations are not common. One word and only one is usually applied to God, and that is "Father." In five verses in the New Testament God is spoken of as King, and in two hundred and eighteen as Father.* No other name is often applied to Him. When Jesus disputed with the doctors He answered His mother, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" And when He hung on the cross He cried, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." He first enounced Himself Messiah to a heathen woman of disreputable character, and yet to her He spoke of His Father three times, and once of God as a Spirit. "The hour

* See Cruden's Concordance.

24 INTERPRET GOD BY HIS FATHERHOOD.

cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him.* When Jesus taught His disciples concerning prayer He put away heathen ideas of prostrations and the adoration of a kingly majesty, and said, "After this manner pray ye: Our Father." When He taught trust in Divine providence it was as follows: "Your heavenly Father feedeth them." The parables are instructive reading on this point. Many of them relate to the kingdom of God, and this we have seen is the Father's kingdom. The only parables which clearly teach lessons about God are those in the fifteenth chapter of the Gospel of St. Luke. The first likens Him to a shepherd, the second to a woman, and the third to a father. In the parable of the Tares Jesus speaks of the kingdom of the Father, and the parable of the Unmerciful Servant shows how the Father will treat the unforgiving. But there is one passage more impressive than any other. It is in the Gospel of St. Matthew, the twenty-fifth chapter, where the Master is speaking of the judgment, the rewards of the righteous and the punishment of sinners. Christ is there represented as the King, and saying that the blessed are called "children of my Father"; and they inherit from their Father, as the others are disinherited by Him.

* John iv. 23.

Into the midst of the terrors of judgment that name Father is introduced.

Baptism is first in the name of the "Father."

The lesson about prayer begins with "Father."

The lesson about providence begins with "Father."

The announcement of Christ's Messiahship contains the word "Father."

The Advocate is with the "Father."

The Comforter is to come from the "Father."

When the Supper was first eaten Jesus said that He would not drink of the fruit of the vine again until He drank it with His disciples in His "Father's" kingdom;* and St. Paul declares that when Christ gives up His kingdom it will be into the "Father's" hand.†

Among heathen religions we are introduced to kings. Jupiter ruled by right of force, having dethroned Saturn. Invisible powers, swift to see, remorseless to punish, with no care for men except to get their share of the praise—such were the gods of the pagans, a commonplace, vindictive, heartless, despicable crowd. To those who thought of gods like themselves, only more infernal, came this Nazarene peasant, and all His music was tuned to one note: it was Father at the begin-

* Matthew xxvi. 29.

† 1 Corinthians xv. 24.

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ning, Father at the end, and Father all the time. That name for God is used forty times in the New Testament where any other name is used once. Am I too sanguine when I think that this is the key which will open the door into all the knowledge which man can have of God? If our Lord almost without exception speaks of His Father, shall we who are Christ's go through the world as if we were orphans? As if we were in the hands of a Being who had no interest in us except to get all out of us that He could and then crush us? As if we were responsible to One who had no responsibility to us? All this cannot be better expressed than in the oldest, most Christian, and most Apostolic of all the creeds, "I believe in God, the Father Almighty."

What does Father signify when applied to God? Names now are only designations. Children might as well be numbered. Charles and John mean no more than one and two. It was not so formerly. Names once meant something. They were symbols. They described characteristics. They commemorated events. Thus Job meant "one who weeps or cries"; John, "the grace or mercy of the Lord"; James and Jacob, "one who supplants or undermines"; Jesus, "saviour or deliverer"; Jehovah, "self-subsisting." Formerly a name was given because it was applicable either to the person or to the events of his birth. The Jews

had no name for God which they could utter. He was the Awful, the Holy, the One who concealed Himself in light. To a people who had no name for their Deity Jesus came and gave Him a name. "You do not speak His name; He is a stranger to you; I say to you, call Him Father. He is near to you, your friend." That was something to take hold of hearts. To have called Him King would have suggested Herod, a weakling, a tool of foreigners, who played at royalty and was a slave; it would have pointed toward Cæsar, far-off and unapproachable, who sent wretches without hearts to grind the faces of the poor; it would have reminded of tyranny, remorseless and resistless. To have named God King to such people would have been like naming Him ocean to a drowning man, or storm to one in the track of a tornado. But all over those hills and valleys were fathers working to save enough from the tax-gatherer to buy food for the little ones; in every hut and home "father" was a great and dear name. So Jesus said, call Him Father. There is also a deeper reason for the name. Father and child are of one substance. The child inherits the father's characteristics, his very nature. By applying that name Jesus said to those hard and grasping Jews, "You have the very nature of God; you are the inheritors of His characteristics." Why is that truth so often for-

gotten? Jesus did not only use the name with those who recognised God and obeyed Him; He spoke of Him as Father to all classes. The Lord's Prayer was not given to converted men, for there were then few if any true converts. God is the Father of all men—that is the message of Jesus. A father feels toward his children as his equals. If they disobey he does not regard them with hate, but with sorrow and pain.

Fatherhood cannot be learned from books. The one Book contains the key to the nature of God, but it contains no description of God. It simply says He is Father. Well, what is the ideal father? What says the Book? Nothing. Then turn the eyes inward, and ask what an ideal father is. Every man's own interpretation of the instinct of fatherhood will furnish him the only idea of God which is worth anything. When Christ said, "Pray, Our Father," Father meant what it always means, or nothing. The only way in which a child can get an idea of a father is from *his* father; the only way men can get a conception of the Heavenly Father is by understanding what fatherhood commonly means. It is no weak word. It impersonates love, but love that can be severe as well as tender. Will a father allow a viper to stay in his home, even though it be in the person of his own boy? If need be he will compel the unworthy one to leave the home, but he will

not forsake him. If his boy is in prison he will go to him; if he is in a hospital he will minister to him; if he is among the very devils of society he will say, "I cannot take him home for the sake of the others, but I will never leave him; some time he will come to himself and return, and then he shall find my arms wide open." Is the great Father less gracious and patient than earthly parents? Fatherhood means strength, severity, if need be; yet never severity for its own sake, but always for the restoration of the one who has gone wrong, or the protection of those who are imperilled.

Fatherhood implies responsibility, obligation. It is sometimes said that God is under no obligation to do anything to save sinners; that He would be justified in destroying them without an effort to save them. The idea is monstrous! Bring the thought home. Is your child responsible for his own existence? Does your child determine what his heredity shall be? Does your child decide what his training shall be? No; parents are responsible to their children, for by them they exist; they say where they shall live, and determine their surroundings. Fatherhood feels the burden of a child's weakness. One is born a cripple, and oh! how tenderly he is guarded and nursed. Another is born a moral cripple—through no fault of his. Those who went before him

indulged in sins which have brought him into the world with tendencies to evil. The father is now a different man ; he tries to keep his son from those influences which will develop such tendencies ; he is responsible for the condition of his son, and consequently under obligation to do all that is possible for his protection and salvation. With all reverence it may be affirmed that the Heavenly Father is under obligation to His children, because if He is not He ought never to have been called Father, and because He has recognised and honoured that obligation, for “God commendeth His love toward us in that when we were yet sinners Christ died for us.”

These points are axiomatic. God in the New Testament is known by hardly any other name than Father, and when applied to Him the name should be interpreted in the only way possible, namely, by the instinct of fatherhood in humanity. The use of that name implies that in nature God and man are essentially the same ; that the interests of all are on the heart of God as the interests of our children rest on our hearts ; and that God is under obligation to do all that He can for the restoration of the erring and the salvation of the lost. The universe is in the hands of love ; all worlds are in the leash of love ; the development of history is under the guidance of love ; time, death, judgment, eternity, are in the embrace

of omnipotent and everlasting love ;—and God is the Father Almighty. That is the very heart of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

This revelation of God by fatherhood illuminates certain otherwise dark places in human experience. It sheds light on the doctrine of *Providence*, or the relation of God to individuals. The “conflict between faith and life” is constant and terrible. Those who realise their ambitions and desires have no difficulty in trusting Providence. We always believe in God when He makes things go our way. But calamity is common, and sorrow is universal. Kings have as much of them as peasants. Frederic died of cancer and Rudolph by suicide. “The President pays dearly for his White House.”* Some feel born to fly, but have no wings. Others think they are made for public life, but the public thinks differently. Some have wealth, while others can never get ahead ; their inferiors wear the honours and reap the harvests. Hearts made for homes have no homes. Those not fitted to bear responsibilities struggle under them. Work, sacrifice, saving, are followed by loss. The rainy day comes and nothing is laid by. Health goes, and brave and daring spirits are shut within four walls for years, leaving them only for narrower walls. To-day there is a cloudless sky ; to-night a swift shadow ; to-morrow all will be dark.

* Emerson's Essay on Compensation.

These are frequent experiences. They burn like white-hot iron. They startle, then daze; then comes the vague wonder whether there is anything but everlasting disappointment and never opening mystery. What shall be said? This is the golden key which will unlock all dark doors: *interpret God by His fatherhood.* Try any other; the doors move not. Try this; they swing on silent hinges. God is Father. He sees and knows all, and He allows that to come to each which each most needs. His purpose is blessing. All are in the hands of One who is doing what earthly fathers do for their children—the very best possible. “But I am disappointed!” Do you never disappoint your child for his good? “But I do not get what I want!” Do you allow your child to have everything he wants? “But I suffer terrible agony!” Do you never have to permit your child to suffer? “But my heart is breaking over what can never come back to me!” What do you do when your child sobs with a broken heart? Do you not take him in your arms, and stroke the hot head, and speak soothing words? What if the Heavenly Father is anxious to do the same?

Interpret God by His fatherhood. When there are limitations which cannot be broken, remember the Father placed them there; when ideals are unfulfilled forever, ask if your ideal for yourself and the Father's are the same.

When wealth goes, something better will come in its place. When death invades, the peace of God waits to come in. If all things are in the Father's hands they must work for the good of all. And they do. The hours may seem dark, but the years are bright. The years may seem in shadow, but the centuries are in sunlight. Out of the darkness of to-night is born the brightness of to-morrow. Interpret God by His fatherhood.

No harm from Him can come to me
On ocean or on shore.*

This teaching of our Lord's sheds light on the doctrine of *prayer*. How may God be approached? If He is a sublimated, oriental despot, with the passions, selfishness, power of such a being, then let men go down on their faces before Him and never dare to look up; if He is only a vast, impersonal force, which blossoms in flowers, heaves in earthquakes, sweeps in tornadoes, and attracts in sunbeams, let them sing songs to the glory and grandeur of nature, but never expect an answer to prayer, for the only response possible will be their own faces mirrored in placid waters, or the echo of their own voices sounding from barren rocks. If God is believed to be harsh, cruel, or blindly just, He will be approached with sacrifices and penances. There are diffi-

* Whittier's Eternal Goodness.

culties around this doctrine of prayer. How can one Being hear so many voices? How can One so great care for one so small? If everything is under the reign of law, how can the order of the universe be broken to answer the petition of the individual? These are proper questions, and yet apparently our Lord never anticipated them. To Him nature was the expression of God. What we call laws He spoke of as the Father's will. His teaching concerning prayer can be understood only by remembering that all His teaching on that subject began as follows: "After this manner pray ye, Our Father." Prayer is intercourse between a parent and his child. We may not understand how our wishes can affect an impersonal law, but we can understand that it may be our Father's will to give or withhold what is asked. Logically those who find no Father in the universe find no efficacy in prayer. If there is no Father prayer is an absurdity. A little child with sweet simplicity kneels at night and prays—it is a very pretty picture for the mother to look upon, but if there is no Father, nothing but force and law, that act of worship means no more than for a chicken to tuck its head under its wing and go to sleep.

When the solemn question arises, Is it possible to approach God with things which apparently concern only individuals?—when there is a longing for companionship and

sympathy which earth cannot satisfy, listen to the simple and beautiful message of Christ; interpret God by His fatherhood.

This teaching of our Lord sheds light on the doctrine of *Judgment* and *Retribution*. As the doctrine of the Trinity was formulated at the close of the third century, and that of justification by faith at the Reformation, so that of last things in our time seems to be in the process of crystallisation. If any one thinks that it has been formulated in its final expression he knows little of Church history or of the current movements of theological thought. This doctrine of judgment and retribution is too large and fundamental to be turned lightly aside. It is as unseemly to pass it over with a jest as it is to dogmatise about it. The facts of judgment and of retribution are clearly taught in the Bible, but not a whit more clearly than in the evolution of history and in the constitution of human nature. Men debate about the time of the judgment; let the discussion go on, but do not allow it to obscure the fact that there is to be a judgment. There is a perennial fascination in the question, How long will retribution last? The investigation is desirable, but it ought not to be permitted to obscure the fact that breaking of law, which is called sin, somehow always and for ever ends in loss and death. About the last things very little has been revealed. Our emphasis should be on what is

beyond question. Retribution is real, and it will last as long as sin lasts—that is sure. But when we come to inquire more closely—then what? The heathen who swarm by hundreds of millions in all lands, and who have had little light for how long we know not—what of them?

That little child, born of drunken parents, trained in a drunkard's home, surrounded by a drunkard's associates, when he comes to manhood with chains on his will and fire in his veins, and dies, what of him?

The millions who are neglected by parents in so-called Christian lands, and are never taught morality or Christianity except as they are misrepresented by those who never go about doing good, what will you say of them?

And so questions press in from all sides, and those who find it hard even to be just, to say nothing of being generous, to those around them, do not hesitate to talk positively of what Divine justice requires and of what must be in infinity and eternity. There is one place where all these questions belong. It is enough for us to know that all the heathen are in the Father's hands; all the little children of drunkards are in the Father's hands; all those who are falsely led because to them is preached a Christ of contention and not of love, are in the Father's hands.

How will God judge? Like a perfect father,

who will not allow his family to suffer because of the error of one, but who will not permit anything to obstruct the path of His "mercy which endureth for ever."

How long will God allow the processes of retribution to go on? This mystery, also, is in the Father's hands. Instead of dogmatising as one class of people do, and denouncing as another class do, it is better to leave the whole question with Him who, because He is Father and God, will now and forevermore do what is right. Of one thing, however, we may be sure, unless freedom be destroyed the child can stay away as long as he chooses, but the Father will never cease to try to bring him home. When the solemn questions of judgment and retribution force themselves upon our attention the only refuge of a thinking man is to remember Christ's teaching concerning God: interpret Him by His fatherhood.

There are many facts in the universe that seem to indicate that God has withdrawn Himself from all connection with it and has left the worlds to roll on uncared for and unheeded. The terrible experiences which lead toward pessimism are neither few nor easily evaded. Around most the shadows sometimes settle until it seems as if the blackness can never be broken. The burden of the world's sorrow all bear. Processions are moving toward the grave with no light on their pathway. These facts

sometimes almost compel pessimism, but all things are illuminated and glorified, individuals are no more wreckage on a limitless ocean, but immortal spirits; and purpose, improvement, blessedness, prophecy of victory, shine from all dark places when once we have entered into the spirit of the teachings of Christ, and learned to interpret God by His Fatherhood. "And this is life eternal, that ye may know Him the only true God." "There is but one God, the Father."

When life is all worry and mystery—interpret God by His fatherhood. When prayer seems a mockery and worship an absurdity—interpret God by His Fatherhood. When the awful realities of judgment and retribution confuse the thought and break the heart—interpret God by His Fatherhood. In life, in death, and at the great judgment-day—interpret God by His Fatherhood.

III.

GODS AND GOD.

III.

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“Produce your cause, saith the Lord.”
ISAIAH xli. 21.

THE forty-first chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah illustrates the difficulty which the ordinary reader has in understanding the prophetic books of the Old Testament. So much of it has relation to current events, that it requires study of contemporary history before its meaning can be understood. The prophet was in a high spiritual mood. He was thinking of the deliverance from Babylonian captivity which was to come to his people, and of the means by which it was to be accomplished. Seeing that it would be an act of providence rather than of human power, he used that as an argument to prove that the God of the Hebrews is the God of the world. The chapter divides itself into three parts: from the first to the seventh verse the speaker appeals to “the islands”—meaning the uttermost parts of the world—to tell who had raised up the power that was growing in the East by which deliverance was to be secured; and then, in a kind of fine scorn, represents them as trying to get information

from their gods—idols which had been made with their hands. As history this event has been verified. With the rise of the Persian Cyrus and his dominion, Croesus, who was called the richest man in the world, sent from oracle to oracle and temple to temple to learn whether the Persian commander could be successfully resisted. Before the oracles he poured out his treasures. It has been thought that the Prophet had him in mind when, in substance, he said: “All ye oracles, tell who has raised up this conquering chief.” The second division of the chapter begins with the eighth verse and extends to the twentieth, and is an inspiring and glorious appeal to the Hebrew people to trust in God, who is represented as saying, “I am with thee; I am thy God; I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness.” In this part of the prophecy the Divine efficiency in opening the way before the returning captives is beautifully expressed: “I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the acacia tree, and the myrtle and the oil tree.” Beginning with the twenty-first verse, is another appeal to the nations to show whether their gods could give to them the power which Jehovah had given to the speaker, namely, that of foretelling future events—Can you tell what this great ruler, Cyrus, will do?

The whole chapter revolves around three

thoughts. First, the Persian King is the instrument of God, therefore earthly rulers are Divine agents. Second, God watches over His people and is near to them even when events seem to be going against them. Third, one proof of the superiority of Jehovah to the gods of the nations is that His prophets can foretell the future. Different ages treat religious problems from different standpoints. A great argument in all ages, however, for the reality of God has been found in the unity of history. To this the Prophet appealed when he said, You can see that Jehovah is God because Cyrus is carrying out His purposes. Using the same principle, we say, Providence is a reality because a study of history shows that all events in all ages have been moving toward the realisation of righteousness in the life of humanity. The argument from ability to predict is not now regarded as of much importance. The essential thought in the mind of the Prophet may be phrased as follows: Gods and God.

Isaiah, using the means at his command, offered evidence that the Jehovah of the Hebrews was the world's God. We adopt his method, but use different illustrations.

Why do we believe that our conception of the Deity is true, and why should we try to induce others to accept it? If the Christian teaching concerning God is better than that of other religions it will appear by comparison.

Isaiah appealed to the ability to predict in evidence of Jehovah's greatness; a better plan in our time is to compare the ethical value of various ideas of the Divine Being. Let us consider the teaching of three religions concerning the Deity. That which is best in itself will convince the most thoughtful inquirers. The true conception of God is that which most fully satisfies the reason, the conscience, and the hearts of the common people. The argument from prophecy or miracle may be ignored, but the proof of teaching from its essential value is irresistible. As fairly and clearly as possible we will examine the teachings of three religions concerning the Divine Being, and then ask which is most satisfying to the heart and moral sense.

Max Müller, in his famous lecture on Missions, delivered by invitation of Dean Stanley in Westminster Abbey, said that there are but three missionary religions—Mohammedanism, Buddhism and Christianity.* All other faiths, he declares, are slowly, but surely dying. Leaving those faiths which are in a measure decadent, let us endeavour to compare and contrast the ideas of the Supreme Being as found in “the missionary religions.”

The God of the Buddhists. There are so many phases of Buddhism that it is hardly fair to take any one as representative of all, but it

* “On Missions,” p. 35.

will not be unfair to any sect of Buddhism to say that, considered as a whole, it is practically without a God. That fact accounts for the sadness of many of its teachings. Buddhism recognises no personality. It does not grasp our ideas of personality even when applied to men. Buddhistic peoples understand the national and family relations, but have little conception of individual personality. The Buddhist Deity is law, an eternal process, order. When you ask whether behind that law or process is an intelligence, the priests tell you that they do not know. They recognise the order of the world, and that the breaking of that order results in misery, and harmony with it in blessing. Their religion is devoted chiefly to finding ways by which they may conform to the order of the universe. The largest of the sects in Japan believes in a being who is himself a product of an eternal process. It teaches that nothing which men do has any effect on this being. He devotes himself to men, but they can neither please nor displease him. Their well-doing or wrong-doing concerns themselves alone. In Buddhistic catechisms there is no teaching at all, that I have been able to find, concerning the Being whom we call God. There is much about their sacred books, about the work of the human saviour, Buddha, but little or nothing pertaining to the Supreme Being. At the entrance to the Japanese park

at Kamakura, in which is the great image of Buddha, an inscription speaks of Buddhism as the eternal Order, as Law, but it contains no recognition of personality. It is correct, therefore, to say, that that form of religion which Max Müller would probably place next to Christianity as a missionary faith, which is surely manifesting remarkable vitality, and which is accepted by as many as any other in the world, if not by more than any, is without any clear teaching concerning the Supreme Being. It knows law, but not personality; it knows love, but love as the result of a process, and not as indwelling in a person. I confess that it is impossible for me to grasp the thought of an order and a law without directing force behind them. Such a doctrine leaves no place for sympathy, and suggests no help for those who are toiling in the midst of the sorrows and pains of earth. It finds its logical development in the sadness which characterises the literature of all Buddhistic peoples.

What does Mohammedanism teach concerning the Deity? It agrees with Christianity in affirming the unity and spirituality of God. In origin it is much later than Christianity, and has confessedly adopted many Jewish and Christian ideas. Mohammedans teach the unity, spirituality, and holiness of God, as intensely and constantly as Christians, but they believe in a Being who is practically Fate

rather than an intelligent Providence. They exaggerate and magnify the mediæval doctrine of the Sovereignty of God. They believe that He is pleased with a loyalty to Himself which is utter disloyalty to humanity. They worship a Being one and spiritual, but whose spirituality is so harsh and cruel that He can be delighted with the massacre of Greeks, Bulgarians, and Armenians ; and be satisfied with compulsory devotion on the part of those whose hearts are far from Him. The whole story is told in the fact that converts can be made to the Deity of the Mohammedans by the sword. Such an One may be great but He cannot be good.

These are the two missionary religions other than Christian which Max Müller believes are competing with Christianity for supremacy among the nations. Oftener than we think, persons in Christian lands ask : Why should we believe in the Christian teaching concerning God rather than that of the Buddhists or the Hindus, the Parsees or the Mohammedans ? The teaching of the Parsees is essentially that of the Hebrews, and Hinduism, so far as it has any vitality, has been merged in Buddhism. When any one comes with that earnest and searching question it is entitled to a frank and candid answer. The time has passed for attempted evasion of difficulties. The thought of the world is focussed on every thinking

mind. Children are reading and studying the faiths of the different nations as they study their histories. They cannot read about Japan and India without coming face to face with Buddhism; about Turkey and Arabia without meeting the story of Mohammed. Is there not as much reason to believe that Christians are mistaken in their ideas of God as to think that the Buddhists and Mohammedans are mistaken? The question should have an intelligent reply. The only authority which any intelligent persons recognise now is that of truth, and the only way any have of determining absolute truth is by its correspondence with the deepest human need. What God best satisfies a human soul in its life-long struggles?

Every religion must be judged by its teaching concerning God. That is the centre of everything. All men are what they believe concerning God. If they think that they can never pass beyond His power or sight; that He is perfectly holy; that everything wrong is hateful to Him, and everything good pleasing; if they believe in Him as really as in themselves, it will be the effort of their lives to please Him. But if they believe that He is simply an order or a process, and that happiness can result only from harmony with that order, they will still seek to realise happiness by obedience; but failing in that will anticipate only misery, because the inevitable thought will be:

“I have put myself outside of the moral order, and now there is no one to put me back.” If we believe in a Being who has determined everything so that there is no place for individual choice ; that we shall die when our time comes, and must suffer what is decreed, then we shall follow our own impulses and satisfy ourselves with the thought that all things are determined and it makes no difference what we choose. Therefore the most important question ever asked is, What do we believe concerning God ?

If it were possible to adopt the dramatic form which characterises almost all the Old Testament prophets, we would summon before us three teachers and ask them to give us their ideas of God. Buddha appears absorbed in thought on the mysteries of existence and the causes of sorrow. We approach him and ask : Buddha, what do you believe and teach concerning whom men in these days call God ? It is not difficult for any to understand his answer. He says : “From long meditation upon human sorrows and the nothingness of things, I have come to the conclusion that what men call God is simply an eternal order or process. Beyond that I know nothing whatever. But of this I am sure—no one can escape from that order, and no one can hope for happiness in this world or in any world who does not live in harmony with it.”

The next is a far different man ; he is eager, aggressive, intense, dogmatic, with something of the spirit of a warrior. It is Mohammed. Let us ask him : Mohammed, what do you teach concerning God ? Would he not say : " God is one ; He is a spirit ; He is absolutely Holy ; He demands the loyalty of all human beings. Those who will not yield loyalty by choice must be compelled to do so by force. He prefers the choice, but he will be satisfied with submission to force, and whatever force is necessary is justifiable."

Last, the One whom Christians call " Master " joins the group. How I could like to see those three men standing side by side while they speak about this exhaustless theme. Of course we are more or less prejudiced, and it is not possible entirely to put away our training and our experience ; but for the moment we will try to step outside that prejudice, and listen to Jesus as He takes His place—a young and very human man—beside Buddha and Mohammed. Does He not speak something as follows ?— " Yes, there is order in the world, and that order is eternal, and no one can escape from it ; but I go farther than Buddha, and say with Mohammed that that order proceeds from a directing Intelligence answering to what men call a person ; that that Person is a spirit and holy. But I cannot agree with Mohammed when he says that God can be pleased with the

enforced loyalty of any, for He is not simply our Sovereign ; He is our Father, and nothing can please Him except the voluntary affection of His children.”

That voice grows soft and musical as it continues : “ I will interpret my thought concerning God by your own selves. When you ask what God is remember what earthly parents are. What would be a perfect human father or mother ? Combine the two ; multiply the result by the difference between the earth and the heaven, and you have my teaching concerning God. All nations and all individuals are in the hands of the Father of all. He has a plan and a purpose, and all are in the interests of love, and He can use no method which will be at enmity with love.”

The Speaker becomes quiet for a moment and then resumes : “ You want to know what I teach concerning God. I have tried to put it all into a life ; I have tried to show by what I was on the earth what God is in eternity. He feels toward evil as I felt when I drove the money-changers from the Temple ; He feels toward little children as I felt when I took them in my arms ; He feels toward sickness as I felt when I touched the leper and made him whole ; He feels toward the poor as I felt when I preached glad tidings unto them ; He feels toward all who violate His law as I did when, after having been pierced by nails, I was still able to pray,

‘Forgive them.’ All law and all order in the universe are expressions of the Father’s will ; not one human being ever gets beyond His love ; no sin can prevent Him from loving, and no darkness hide from His eye ; His purpose is blessing for all the race, and some time and some way that plan of grace will be realised.”

Those three great teachers of the world, those men who have influenced thought more than any others who have ever lived, now stand before us, and we have listened to their words. They are profoundly earnest, and no one has contradicted the other ; but has not one gone far in advance of the others ? The inquiry again recurs, What shall we believe concerning God ? If the Buddhist teaching is best and enough, by all means accept that ; let missionaries arise from beyond the sea, fill our cities, and preach a new and better gospel. If Mohammed is right and Christians are wrong, let Mohammedanism, even at the edge of the sword, compel every one to accept the teaching of its Prophet. But can any believe that an impersonal process, eternal inflexible, heartless, is more rational or better than the “Father” taught by our Lord Jesus Christ ? Would such a faith satisfy the reason or the heart ? Would it make nobler men ? Can any believe that a Deity who would be pleased with cruelty and bloodshed is large enough and holy enough for the God of the nations, the ages, the universe ? Did you ever know anyone who

wished to have more in his God than he finds in the teachings and life of Jesus Christ? I speak not of the dogmas of His followers, but the teachings of the Master. Job cried, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!" That terribly bitter cry which rings down the ages is not unanswered. Jesus Christ has taught all that any need to know; all that any in their moments of deepest longing care to know concerning God; therefore the conclusion is inevitable that He has uttered truth. Because He brings us into the presence of One who forgives sins; because He shows that the order of love is mightier and more lasting than the order of force; because He declares that a man giving himself to redeem men is a true representation of Him in whom we live and move and have our being; because He teaches that all men, all ages, all worlds, even the eternities and infinities, are in the hands which were pierced; because He makes it plain that all law is love, and all love law, and that love can be defeated neither in time nor in eternity, we bow before Him, and accept His Father as our Father, and the God whom He reveals as our God.

IV.

THE ETERNAL EVANGEL.

IV.

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“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings.”—ISAIAH lii. 7.

EVANGEL means “good news,” and in this case eternal means “without end.” The good news which can never fade from the minds and hearts of men is our high theme. The prophet, in a rapt and exalted moment, has ceased to condemn his people, and calls them to awake, put on their beautiful garments, and move toward the Jerusalem which shall be when the days of captivity are ended. The figure can hardly be appreciated by occidentals. Before there were telegraphs, or swifter means of communication than running men, the one who hurried over the mountains with good news was a beautiful sight. Here is a people cast down, discouraged, surrounded by enemies threatening their lives. Will rescue ever come? There is a man running across the hills, waving his hands, his long hair flying on the wind, crying that relief is at hand. How beautiful are his feet in the sunlight, every step speaking of deliverance! That is the figure of the prophet. He is in Babylon, in the midst of heat, and the long

and dreary monotony of lowland life ; but in his ecstasy he seems to catch a glimpse of a messenger speeding over the mountains of Zion, and crying : “ Awake ! awake ! deliverance is at hand ! ” That messenger was a real evangel. The text describes a section of universal history. We have selected it because of its symbolism. That messenger—a herald of gladness and joy—is a type of the Eternal Evangel.

People in all lands and times are essentially the same. They differ as to their skin and hair, their clothing and language, but language, clothing, hair and skin are externals. Humanity is one, and in all ages its experiences have been essentially the same.

An evangel has always and everywhere been desired. It was said of Christ that He was “ the Desire of all nations.” The significance of that universal desire cannot be exaggerated. If there were a mountain high enough for one to overlook all who now live and all who ever have lived, at some time he would find every face turned in the same direction. All would be found looking up into the great wide sky, and asking whether there is any way out of sin, sorrow and death. These are eternal problems.

Men have always believed that they ought to do right and ought not to do wrong, and have heard voices condemning when they have been disobedient to what they have believed to be right. This is a part of the universal experi-

ence. Every altar on every mountain top in India and Japan, every temple in Egypt and Assyria, have borne witness to this truth. This is one of the world's significant facts. Why do men feel guilt? It is the most real and terrible fact in the universe. Ideas concerning its treatment have been degraded and false, but those who have been untrue to themselves have always found themselves bound with fetters and chains. Echoing down the ages rings the exceeding bitter wail of those who have been false, who feel that there must be some way of escape ; who know not what it is, but whose longing was never better expressed than in the words of Job : "O, that I knew where I might find Him ! "

The longing for escape from guilt is only one form of this experience. Sorrow also is one of the eternal mysteries. The oldest books are occupied with this endless enigma. The first poets tried to solve it, and the first philosophers pondered it. If it were possible to go back to the time when as yet there had been only joy, and to see the person who first of all felt the sting of sadness and knew what grief and anguish were, what a strange, stunned, dazed, stupified being should we find. Literature is the expression of life. Poetry and philosophy are not vain and foolish imaginations ; they are the records of what seers and sages have seen and thought concerning human life's

mysteries. Go back howsoever far you will and wherever you may, you will find that all have faced the same great problem. It rested with the weight of worlds on Plato and Homer; Buddha spent a generation in meditation on the causes of sorrow; it was one of the burdens which broke the heart of Jesus. Great authors have time for hardly any other theme. One test of an author's immortality is whether he studies such subjects. Whence is sorrow? What is its meaning? Will it ever end? Running like a line of light through the world's literature shines dim, but real, the faith that somewhere and sometime the clouds will break and the shadows flee away.

As culture extends men feign carelessness concerning what may lie beyond. Some say: "Enough for us to know what is right here and now; we need no motives from the life beyond." Perhaps they do not appreciate motives from the life beyond; that does not change the fact of which history is full—that everywhere that human thought has been recorded the question of Job has been raised: "If a man die, shall he live again?" It is found in the pyramids of Egypt; in the temples and shrines of ancient Greece; in the rude wooden platforms on which the American Indians placed their dead. Somehow men have not been able or willing to believe that death is final. They have trained themselves as if they were destined to immortal

existence. They have reared their children as if they were not made simply to live a little while and then to be buried. They have indulged hopes of a better time, and have dreamed of an unseen universe around all who live, toil, and struggle on the earth.

Sin, sorrow, death, have been everywhere. But there is another fact even more significant: Wherever there has been sin, in some form or other has appeared the expectation that its power would be broken; that by magic art, by sacrifice, by shedding of blood of man or beast, or direct intervention from above, relief might be obtained. With sorrow there has been a hope, vague and insubstantial but ever real, that sometime it must end. Was not the faith of Socrates the world's faith when, in conversation with his disciples before he drank the hemlock, he announced in triumphant and positive terms that though his body might be imprisoned and killed he never could be caught? Listen to his words: "Those who . . . having led holy lives are released from this earthly prison and go to their pure home which is above . . . in mansions fairer far than these."

These illustrations show that some evangel has always been desired. No phrase ever used concerning our Saviour is more appropriate or beautiful than "the Desire of all nations." That thought came to me as I visited the

temples and shrines of Japan; as I climbed mountains crowned with temples in honour of Buddha and the mother of Buddha; as I saw processions of men running long distances that they might get release from their sins; as I saw burdened souls putting their hands on images, and then transferring them to themselves that relief from pain might be secured; as I found that even Buddhism itself is not satisfied with its old idea of Nirvana, a state of eternal rest, if not of extinction of being, and had blossomed into one sect which believes in "a western paradise," in which all will live and grow for ever. From the Pyramids to the Pantheon, from the prostrate columns of Stonehenge to the loftiest gable of Mayahsan, shines one resplendent truth which has never been absent from the world, a truth which is all contained in one phrase—"the Desire of all nations."

To this universal and passionate hunger Jesus Christ comes as the world's Evangel. The four evangelists of art are sublimely symbolical. Grouped, and holding golden trumpets, they face the four quarters of the world, and speak their message which is borne on all the winds: "Hear ye! hear ye! the Desire of nations is come!" That is the Evangel. In the midst of the world's mystery Jesus stands like a lighthouse, surrounded by black night and stormy waters. His message is the revelation of God as Father. Is

there hope for those who have violated truth and right? Reasoning only from the analogy of human law the answer must be, No. A man is a murderer; no matter what taints of hate are in his blood. The State can only say, He must die, or be pardoned to an infamy worse than death. A man in a fit of passion puts out his eyes, and nature calmly and irrevocably says, He must remain blind. Neither society nor the universe assure hope to an individual conscious of guilt, but Jesus says that the divine way is not reflected by the State and the inflexibility of the physical order. His reply to all sinners is, "You are in your Father's hands." That revelation should have its full force in these days when men are more likely to be overwhelmed by despair than to take undue advantage of hope. Let a man ask himself, What would I do if my child, stained, tainted, brutalised, but in dead earnest, were to come to me and say, "Father, I am no more worthy to be your child; let me be anything to be near to you, for my past I despise and desire to escape?" The instant, glad response of every man worthy to be a father would be: "My son, come home. God bless you!" And he would go to his house and call together the other children and the mother, and say between glad sobs: "Our boy has come back, and this time he is willing to be anything if he can only be near us. Shall we help him?" And to the tears in the father's

eyes, tears in every other eye would respond, and from that moment the whole household would be organised in the interest of that one repentant child. That is the way that Jesus meets the world's consciousness of guilt when it is attended by repentance. He says: "Remember your Father." That is enough, since fatherhood in God is only human fatherhood idealised and multiplied by infinity. The angels with the trumpets set this music pealing to all who have sinned in the four quarters of the earth: "God is Father; the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ—every man's Father."

The same message goes to all those who bend beneath sorrow. We know not why any suffer, but we do know that suffering is not God's will for man. He uses it for human welfare, but never as an end; and the words of Jesus concerning sorrow indicate that it is contrary to the primary will of God. He is represented as bearing griefs and carrying sorrows; as One who would remove from men their burdens, so far as that is possible. To ask why we suffer is an idle question; far better to put emphasis upon the truth that, notwithstanding the mystery of suffering, this universe is organised in the interests of blessing; that no man is beyond the reach of God, and God is to be interpreted by fatherhood. Gravitation holds the stars in systems, so that every star and constellation feels its sway. What is gravitation?

One of God's ways of working, one expression of His fatherhood ; so equally is every other law and method in the physical and spiritual spheres. Gravitation is inexplicable, and so is sorrow, but both are beneficent if used as they were intended to be used. "Why is my heart so heavy?" No one can answer, but there is a way in which it may be made light. Whatever the sorrow, if we could be sure that it was being used by love, and that greater blessings would result because of it than could come in any other way, there would be no complaint. It is not sorrow that hurts, but apparent injustice. Sorrows are often nature's means of relief. Many a criminal has voluntarily gone to prison because he desired to do something to compensate for the wrong he had done. To all the heavy-hearted, to all who have lost something and know not why, to all who mourn, comes the teaching of Jesus. Never forget that you are in your Father's hands, and that *your* Father can do all things. Unconquerable fatherhood rules in all the affairs of men, therefore all things must work for good.

Again the golden trumpets send their music to the sorrowing in all the four quarters of the earth : "Remember your Father. You are the children of God, who can do no wrong and whom none can resist."

Theorise about it as we may the greatest human problem is death. It looms like an

immense black wall across the path along which all men move. It is the mystery of mysteries. A recent book bears the title, "A Study of Death," but no one has found out anything by studying death. Who has not often felt like throwing himself on some mounded grave, and listening if perchance he might catch some echo from the unseen. But no such echo was ever heard. What does it all mean? Could there be anything more satisfying than this: "In My Father's house are many rooms"? Death is a passage from one room to another. The teaching of Jesus about death is this, Life in the flesh is existence in one room; death is the door that leads into another room. There are many rooms, but all are in our Father's house, and our Father's house is His children's home. That is all we know and all we need to know. That is the last, greatest, and only satisfying word concerning death. Anything less would be as bad as nothing; anything more would only amplify this. Why, then, do Christians sorrow when their loved ones die? Not because this revelation is insufficient, but because to be separated from those who are dear is a pain in proportion as they are loved. The many mansions in the Father's house do not explain death, but they do rob it of its terrors. When you left your home up among the hills for college or for business your mother wept, not because you were going to larger

opportunity, but because she could not every day feast her eyes upon your face. When you stood at the marriage altar and gave your life to another, father and mother had heavy hearts, not because you were entering a larger world, but because you would no longer live in the old home. When friends die Christians weep, not because their loved ones have gone into the ampler room in the palace of God, but because the place where they once laboured and prayed will know them no more.

Once more those symbolic figures put the golden trumpets to their mouths and ring out this music to all corners of the earth and all spaces of the sky : "Death is not extinction ; it is going from room to room in our Father's house."

This is the evangel to a sinning, sorrowing, dying race. It may all be condensed in three texts whose comfort will never fail from among men : "Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out." "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." "Death is swallowed up in victory." And these three texts are illumined and glorified for all who from their hearts are able to confess their faith, saying : "I believe in God, the Father Almighty."

This is the message for which all peoples have waited and which no teaching can ever transcend. It means more now than it ever could have meant before, because eighteen cen-

turies have added to it their emphasis. No one has trusted in Jesus Christ without losing his consciousness of guilt and being thrilled with power and passion for Divine service.

No one has believed in God the Father without finding every sorrow a means of growth and every tear a seed of joy.

No one has listened when the Great Teacher has spoken of resurrection and life without being glad to wait for the revelation of the many rooms and the Father's house.

This is the Eternal Evangel, and no better news can ever fall on human ears than that which tells of salvation from the guilt and power of sin, which makes it possible to believe that the Lord is good to all, and declares that beyond the black wall of death are fairer fields and brighter skies.

This is the music that from the golden trumpets and ten thousand times ten thousand voices soundeth far and ceaseth never: the Eternal Evangel is the Gospel of the blessed God which declares that behind all sin, all sorrow, and all death is our Heavenly Father.

That song shall swell from shore to shore.
One hope, one faith, one love, restore
The seamless robe that Jesus wore.

V.

THE VOICE OF THE CROSS.

V.

THE VOICE OF THE CROSS.

"There they crucified Him."—*LUKE xxiii. 33.*

THESE words describe an event by no means uncommon in that cruel age. In themselves they are not unique enough to attract attention: as a part of the ministry of Jesus Christ they have relations to all ages and climes. The death of Christ was not so painful as that of the two thieves who hung by His side. Considered simply as a historic fact, it was the death of One who by legal process had been adjudged to be a criminal. It has been called a sacrifice, but there was no altar, no fire, no priest. There has always been a tendency to surround the cross with artificial scenery. In it the dramatic instinct has found a fruitful subject. Artists have followed the example of theologians, so far as their art would allow them. I have always considered Gérôme's painting of "The Crucifixion" peculiarly noble because it shows only the three crosses, and stretching from their feet the shadows of those hanging upon them. The attempt to put infinite agony into a human face always fails. Guido Reni's "Ecce Homo" is perhaps the

greatest effort to depict sorrow that was ever made, but those upturned eyes full of tears, that thorn-crown, that mouth parted with grief too deep for groans, convey no meaning beyond terrible physical anguish. Ethical and spiritual sensibility defy the painter's brush even more than the logician's formula or the theologian's system. If the crucifixion in itself was not more tragic than thousands of other events, in what do we find the great and vital mystery of Calvary? Because of its relations to humanity, because it has been a fountain of moral regeneration, because it has been a source of salvation and new life, we are led to ask concerning the personality of Him who died that death. The cross alone proves nothing concerning Christ or His mission, but what followed shows that no ordinary mortal there poured out His soul in death, and that the life which then culminated was not like that of other men. You cannot begin with the cross as a fact in history and reach any adequate conclusion concerning the Man; but beginning with the work of Christ you are led by a process swift and irresistible to something like the faith of Peter—"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Concerning the relation of the death of Christ to the Deity and the moral order, speculation has been common and useless. Salvation is as mysterious as the action of the elemental

forces. How gravitation operates no one knows; how the energy in a sunbeam is communicated to a flower no one understands; how electricity can be manipulated so that a man may hold a pen in Chicago and write his signature in New York baffles imagination; and until such facts are explained no one need be dazed at the mystery of spiritual life. The cross in its relation to man is what claims our attention. If that cross were still standing, endowed with life and power of speech, what would be its message in these latter years of the nineteenth century? We speak of the "Voice of the Cross." By that we mean the motive which is brought to bear upon every man to co-operate with those Divine forces which found expression on the cross. And by the cross we do not mean simply Calvary and the wood that was there raised, but that suffering and sacrifice which were the symbol of the eternal love of God. If Christ was only a man, then the appeal is no greater than that which comes from any heroic death. But the cross reveals at the same time the love of God and the ideal life of man. Its call runs throughout the earth, as that of the sunshine and the rain. Every sunbeam seems to have a voice for the farmer, telling him that winter is past, and the time for the sowing of seed has come. The raindrops and the sunbeams call those who till the soil to co-operate with unseen forces for the realisation of the

harvest. No farmer understands how the ground is made ready for the seed, and as little how the seed grows after it is sown. And yet he may take advantage of the forces in nature, and compel the earth to bring forth harvests. Even the dullest savage may co-operate with the universe and work with it for the support of the life of man. As raindrops and sunbeams appeal to the farmer, so the cross, on which the Divine love broke into expression, appeals to all, telling them that no man is left to himself ; that, so to speak, redemption is in the nature of things ; that God works with all who will work with Him ; that the Divine invitation, "Whosoever will, let him come," has in it a deep and sublime philosophy ; that it is literally true that there is not a human being so humble or oppressed that he may not link his puny self to the great love of God, and by it be led into the fulness of the Divine life. I have sometimes imagined the cross to be a living being, with a voice which, ringing down the centuries and throughout all lands, carries ever this message : The true life of man is that which culminated when our Master died.

To what does the cross call men ?

It calls to personal holiness. The teaching and mission of our Lord point toward the impartation to man of the very life of God. All have that life in the sense that they have existence, but all have not the nature of God, which

is holiness. What is meant by holiness? Perfect goodness. Goodness is a word which every one understands. There have at different times been different moral ideals. In one age, the bravest have been considered the best; in another, the shrewdest; but holiness, in the sense of unalloyed goodness, has always been recognised as the finest flower of human character. In its Biblical usage, holiness was applied to the sacrificial system, in which only animals perfectly sound were offered to God. That perfection was in our Master. Holiness is a state of moral purity. Some words need no definition. Pure as the air! Pure as the light! Pure as Christ! To think of an unholy imagination or an unworthy desire in the whiteness of His nature is blasphemous. But holiness is not only perfect health and purity: it is also something set apart for the service of God. A man with not one thrill of passion, not one desire for personal aggrandisement, but with ambition to be great for the sake of at last giving all to God, suggests what holy character is. It is not weakness; it has no kinship with merely sentimental piety. It is a positive quality—the sum of all virtues. A holy man cultivates every faculty to the utmost, acquires every possible art, disciplines his mind, trains his thought, acquires grace of action and expression, completes his manhood, in order that at last he may offer a finished and beautiful sacri-

fice to Him whom he delights to honour. Patience, temperance, love, have been called weak ; and yet patience requires more strength than passion ; temperance more resolution than audacity ; and love, both bravery and endurance. In the old time Cæsar was the hero ; in the new time, Jesus upon the cross, dying that He may heal the woes of humanity, is the hero. To what does the cross call ? To Christ-like holiness ; to the realisation that every gift and grace, every faculty and energy, every motive and thought, belong to God. Pure as the water without a taint ! as a diamond without a flaw ! as the light that bathes the world in splendour ! What were men intended to be ? What Christ was. What word condenses His character better than any other ? Holiness. No thought of self ! no plan for self ! everything for humanity ! So pure in heart that He could see God ! To that all are called—to the very character of Him who hung upon the cross. Is the ideal high ? It cannot be too high. Is it an impossible ideal ? When Robert Morrison started for China, an incredulous American said to him : “ Mr. Morrison, do you think you can make any impression on the Chinese ? ” “ No, ” was the reply ; “ but I think the Lord can. ” That ideal of perfect, flawless, stainless purity, can it ever be realised by such beings as ourselves, stained by unholy memories and polluted by foul thoughts ? Is not that a height beyond

our reach? I fancy that I hear some incredulous man say, as he looks out over the fields loaded with snow, "The idea that a harvest will ever grow in these cold and icy fields is absurd!" It is absurd to you and me, but not to Him who can send His sun to melt the snow, and His rain to nurse the seeds that were sown before the snow had fallen. To the very life of God we are called. It is impossible to us, but not impossible to Him.

The cross appeals to all to fill their lives with service and sacrifice. On the cross was the noblest example of self-sacrifice for the sake of those who have nothing to return that this earth has seen. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." He "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." Service and sacrifice are the natural language of love. Other men may have ambition for themselves, but a Christian must do as his Master did—make the most of himself for the sake of humanity. The life that ended on the cross, how little it is understood! We bear the sacred name; rear buildings for His worship; wear the symbol of sacrifice in jewels on our persons; talk about the cross; but how many know that there is but one material of which a cross can be made? There was never yet one cross of gold or silver or precious stones; the only material that can get into that shape is love; and love must manifest itself in service which

will not shrink from sacrifice. Love without service is like a sunbeam without light. The mother must minister to her child. A friend must seek to be helpful to his friend. The first recorded word of Christ was, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" and His last, "It is finished." What lies between these words? Constant ministry. When He said, "Let him that is chiefest among you be servant of all," He outlined the form that the Christ-life must take. The voice of the cross calls to what the cross symbolised. "Ah, but," you say, "that was all very well for Him who came for the accomplishment of a special work, but it has no meaning to us." No meaning for us? Are there not as great evils to-day as when He came? Do not millions bend beneath indescribable sorrow? Have all men even yet the truth? Do all know that they are children of God? Have the doors between this and the spirit life been thrown open? The very work which faced the Master still remains. He began that which His followers must complete. Take two or three illustrations.

The poverty of the world is not so great as when the Christ was here, but it is still appalling beyond description. Think of the families in one city with only one room to a family! Think of human beings on the verge of starvation! Think of little children in factories when they ought to be in school! Think of women

with children to support making shirts at ten cents apiece ; finding their thread, paying their rent, fuel, light, clothing, everything out of that wage ! Think of the wretchedness and poverty that surge even to the curbs of the palaces of the rich ! Lazarus and Dives touch elbows. Why do thousands of men cheer the name of Jesus and hiss the mention of the Church ? Because deep in their hearts they recognise that the cross stands for brotherhood, for helpfulness, for a real Gospel to the poor, while they believe that those who bear the name of Jesus have forgotten the message that He spoke. A young student from Oxford, a resident of Mansfield House in East London, with thrilling and pathetic earnestness said not long ago, "Some of us have sworn that we will take no rest until these terrible conditions are done away." Such utterances have been heard before. That splendid enthusiasm will wear itself out, and that young man, if he persists, will sink into an untimely grave. He may live to the age of his Master, but he will hang upon his cross long before the work is completed. The cry of humanity is bitter and terrible. "The cry of the children" rings in the ears of those who heap up gold. Into this confusion rises the clear, sweet voice of Him who hung upon the cross : "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye did it unto Me."

Poverty is not nearly so common as sorrow. Many suffer hunger; all sooner or later feel sorrow. Who can speak wisely of the disappointments that embitter? of the losses that make us wonder if there is love anywhere? of the disease that consumes those who are dearer to us than our lives? Who can tell what death—that strangest of mysteries in a world of life—means? Death obtrudes his hideous face into all happy associations, until sometimes it seems as if the sunlight were only a mockery and the very air poison. The work of Christ complete! He who came to bind up the broken-hearted—His work complete! Why, it seems as if it had hardly begun. The Apostle said: “Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.” Enter into each other’s life. Be helpful. Let those who have joy minister to those who are without it. From that cross I seem to hear a voice which comes straight to us, saying: “Thou shalt love one another as I have loved you.” That means, you should enter into one another’s life and bear one another’s burdens, as I have entered into your life and borne your burdens. Over against sorrow and suffering the Master has put Fatherhood and immortality. “Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” “Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.” Ring out the mes-

sage wherever hearts are breaking and eyes are filled with tears! All things are in the Father's hands; not one is utterly alone; no life is without purpose, and all things are moving upward.

The desolation of poverty and sorrow are as nothing when compared with the desolation of sin. The same selfishness that nailed Jesus to the cross still stalks through the earth. The same forces of evil are at work now as of old. In the morning multitudes go out pure as the light—in the evening they return beaten down, defeated, despairing. There is poverty because men choose evil rather than good. There is sorrow because men forget to love one another. Our Master had one mission above all others—by service and sacrifice to bring men from the sway of sin and sorrow into the life and love of God. His life was given to humanity. Study His career, and see if you can get anything out of it except ceaseless effort to destroy poverty, to break the clouds of sorrow, to find the secret places in which lurk the powers which work evil among men. All for man, and nothing for Himself. To that His followers are called. Wherever His story goes, there also goes the mute appeal that men should be as He was. Oh, what a world this would be if competition could go out, and co-operation come in and prevail! How much of sorrow would go if all would help one another, and never in any way hinder; if

all would work together to overcome sin and destroy evil! I seem to hear a voice calling to you and to me, saying: "You believe in Me? then follow Me. You believe in the cross? then live the life of the cross. You believe in the love of God? the love of God can manifest itself only in the love of man." Let us dare to be singular! dare to go against traditions and theories! dare to do anything that is not wrong, if thereby we may help a little to do away with poverty, and cause rifts in the clouds through which the light of God's love may shine into the broken hearts of brother men. Into the midst of controversies concerning the mysteries of time and eternity; into the midst of competitions among the churches; into the midst of those who use wealth as if there were no judgment; close beside those who are ungenerous and unkind, that living cross moves, with the streaming hands and the pierced side, and everywhere sound with thrilling pathos the words—"As thou hast sent Me into the world, even so send I them into the world."

The voice of the cross reaches to all men. It entreats us to fight against every usage or custom which is at variance with love. It summons us to war against every theory which confuses a man with a thing. It insists that all shall have the opportunity of growing into the Divine likeness. It would have us go into business houses with a scourge of small cords,

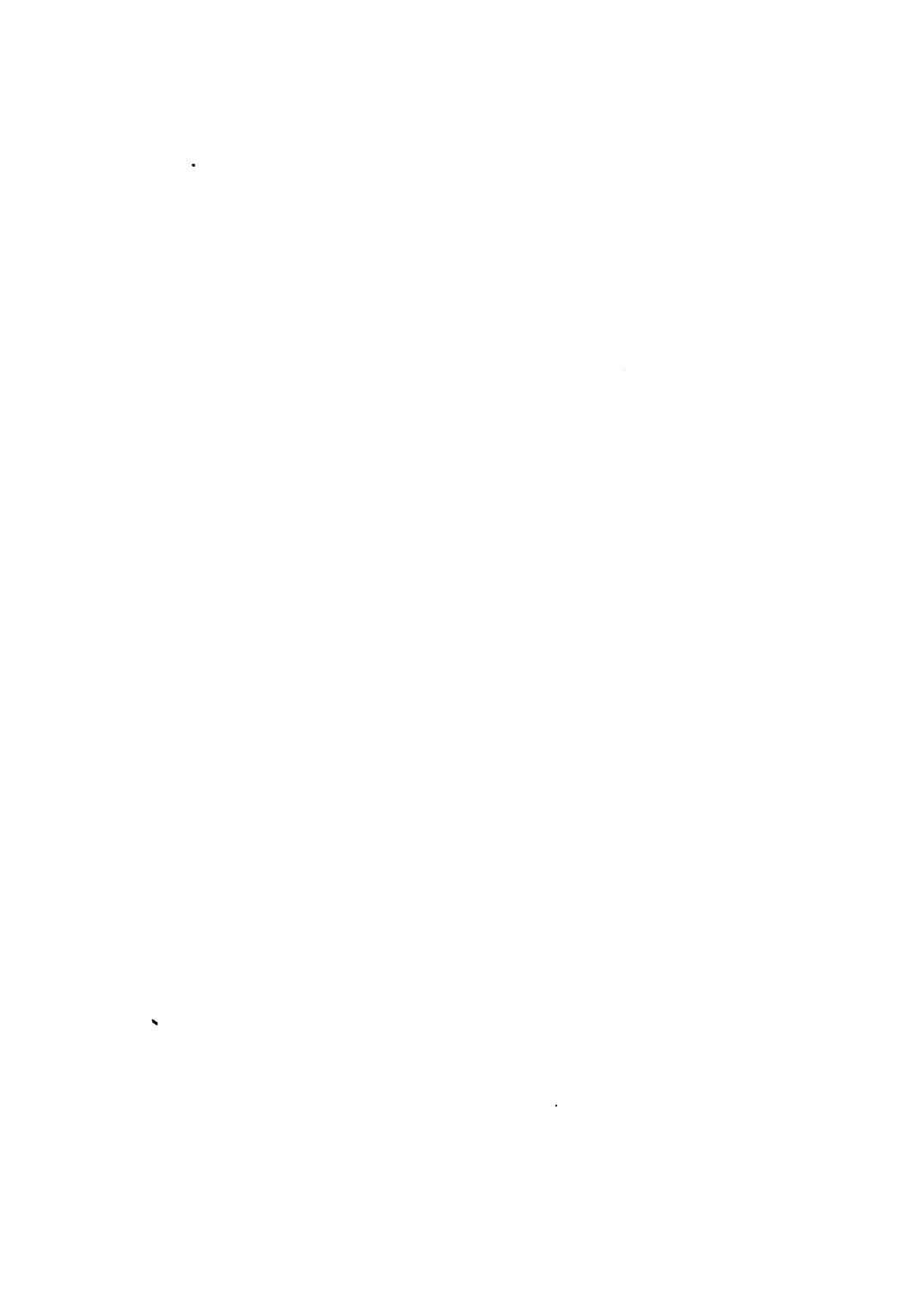
and drive out those who pay wages which necessitate starvation or sin. It summons the faithful to enter churches which make discriminations based on wealth, and lift high the Gospel which cannot be bought with a price. It calls us to be brothers; to put our hearts at the disposal of those whose hearts are broken, and, in some way and at any cost, to *find* all who are without God and without hope, and then to be willing even to die that they may be brought to the Father's house and the Father's love.

Many other messages come from that cross. It asks, "Can you question the final outcome of the conflict between evil and good? Can you doubt that what has been begun at so great cost will be surely completed?" You are at sea in the midst of the wild, black night. Not a star is visible. The rush and roar of the waters is in your ears. The desolate, awful ocean is around, and blackness of darkness above and beneath. Thus do we sometimes picture the world in which we live—evil without, evil within, evil behind, and an abyss before us! But that is not a true picture. Nature is not heartless. The elemental forces are beneficent. All things work for good. When despondency concerning the final victory comes, the cross seems to move nearer, the very wounds in the hands and feet, and the spear-print in the side, to find voices which ask, Can

you believe that the work which the Saviour began can be defeated? The call of the cross is to holiness, to service and sacrifice, to faith in the final triumph of good: it calls all who bear the Christian name to realise that they are in fellowship with the Son of God in saving the world. The cross utters its voice in our ears. It seems to say: "You are blest with all that you need; you have friends and love: I bring to you the greatest of all possible privileges. Power will cease, wealth will go, friendships must end; I offer to you fellowship with me in the work of bringing all men into actual brotherhood, and into the realisation, not only of Fatherhood, but of immortality." Two voices sound from that living cross which has moved down the ages and stands by our sides to-day. One speaks to those who have taken the Christian name, saying: "Rise to your privilege! the servant is to be as his Lord! my work is your work! where I went you are to go! what I did you are to do! those who were dear to me should be dear to you; the more you have the more you should give! the more nearly perfect you make your life the richer will be its achievement for God and humanity!" Are we heeding that voice?

Yet once more that cross moves closer, and yet more intensely and eagerly He who hangs upon it seems to speak to us, and the burden of His words is: "I bring to you that which is

highest and best for time and eternity ; I bring to you the assurance that there is no grief and no sorrow that is not always in the Father's sight and may not be turned into blessing. I bring to you a power by which evil thoughts and tendencies may be destroyed. I bring to you whose memories are full of sad and bad recollections the assurance that no life can have been so wicked, no past so foul, no strength so far gone, as to cut off from the love of God and His willingness to save." Are you willing to hear that voice and to respond to its invitation ?



VI.

THE WAY OF THE CROSS.

VI.

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“And He said unto all, If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.”
LUKE ix. 23.

OUR subject is suggested by a chapter in “The Imitation of Christ,” entitled “The Royal Way of the Holy Cross.” To what does the cross call? Other symbols may be misunderstood—the cross never. The doctrine of the atonement has been the subject of controversy from the earliest Christian times; the doctrine of the cross is too clear for controversy. The noblest Being who ever walked this earth esteemed it His highest privilege to suffer and die that men might be saved—to themselves, to their fellow-men, and to God. The cross stands for self-sacrifice. Self-denial and self-sacrifice are not the same. The cross speaks of self-sacrifice for love; of a Being who disappeared in the work which He came to do; who thought little of Himself and much of others. There may be denial of self for selfish ends. The athlete denies his passions in order that his ambition in other directions may be realised. The gambler denies himself drink that his head may

be clear and his will resolute. Self-denial may be partial ; it may be stoical—for no higher purpose than that pain may be avoided ; but self-sacrifice can never be incomplete. It is a whole offering. He who sacrifices himself gives body and soul, faculty and possession, in the interests of love. What it means for the Christian has been put into clear and positive terms. "The Life is the light of men." What Christ was, that the cross means for us ; the Royal Way of the Holy Cross is made plain in Him. His coming into the human condition, enduring misunderstanding and sorrow ; His submission to poverty and pain ; His refusal to use Divine power for selfish ends ; His physical anguish, and at last His death, all show that He had no thought for self. Study the Four Gospels ; do you find one place in which He sought comfort or enjoyed luxury ? He lived for others, and died for their salvation.

Note another fact. The Master did not bring into the world something new. The way of the cross has always been the only way to happiness, usefulness, and victory. The law of sacrifice is as old as the creation. The Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world. Jesus did not reveal a new order of life, but brought into prominence that which had been in the nature of things and the nature of God from eternity. Assertion of self and of individual rights ends in division and conflict ;

effacement of self and of individual rights ends in harmony and peace. The difference between self-sacrifice as taught by Christ and self-denial as taught by the philosophers is that with them self-denial looks toward no end outside the individual; while with him self-sacrifice is the inevitable expression of love.

The way of the cross is the way of love. There can be no cross without love, and no love without its cross. Love enters into the condition of its object. It goes where its object is. Love always bears burdens and carries sorrows. It did so long before the crucifixion. The mother watches night and day, enters into the conditions of her child, because she is the mother. It is the same between friends. One thinks of another, goes out of his way to do him a favour, not because he is entreated, but because something within impels him. You *must* enter into the condition of your friend and carry him upon your heart. Every David weeps for his Jonathan.

In patriotism the same principle holds. Patriots love their country, and for it, therefore, are willing to die. No Emperor can compel the allegiance of the heart. Force arouses hate; love inspires heroism. And so it happens that many, after the most careful consideration, enter upon courses which they know must end in loss, perhaps in death, because their country calls.

Our Master gives this principle its supreme illustration. To Him there is no nation but the world, and no family but that of the heavenly Father. In His sight all men are brethren. He puts Himself at the service of humanity as a mother puts herself at the service of her child. Multiply by infinity the mother who watches all night with a poor, sick, crying baby, and you have the love which throbs in the heart of God. Mother-love and Divine love are the same in kind; they differ only in degree. "Whosoever loveth is born of God." No man who hates his child can love God; by loving his child he will be helped to love God; by sacrificing for those nearest we are taught to sacrifice for those who are farthest. Through the home friendship has a meaning, and through loyalty to home and friendship the relations of the individual to the race and the whole human family are understood and appreciated. According to the perfection of love there must be suffering. He who loves most may suffer most. If your child is in pain, you are hurt. If your friend is in agony, you cannot sleep at night. If you see men with the eyes of Christ, you will feel toward them with His heart. Those children who have no one to teach them, whose training is in the street; those women who struggle day and night to earn the barest pittance; those men who grind the faces of the poor, will be a burden upon your heart, as they are upon the Master's, because all

are children of our Father, God. Larger love carries larger possibilities of suffering. If a man could grow so that his love could embrace all who live, there would be no limit to what that person might suffer, because his love would embrace the miseries of all men. It is not surprising that Christ *died!* Who could feel the world's sorrow and sin, and live? It breaks our hearts to carry one man's burdens. A young man lost his reason, and afterward recovered. Speaking of the experience, his father said, "It almost killed us." That sorrow for one child was the reverse side of those parents' love. If Christ felt for all men as a mother feels for her child, the cross was inevitable. As men become like Christ they enter into human sorrow and sin, and cannot rest until they have done something toward making better conditions. Self-sacrifice is the necessary expression of the life of love. The most beautiful nature loves most.

The way of the cross is the only way to real usefulness. He is not helpful who lives for himself. A selfish man is like a furnace which radiates no heat. He serves his fellow-men no more than a mass of ice warms a garden. The sun shines for all the mountains and meadows, and the good man lives for all his fellow-men. Appreciation and sympathy are impossible at arm's length, and equally impossible where all thought is of self. Take the problem of poverty. How may the poor be helped? Cer-

tainly not by the rich staying in their homes and coldly giving money. The easiest way to get the tramp from the door may be the worst for him. He who sits in his palace and reads pious lectures to the poor on the sin of shiftlessness will be hated, because the instinct of the man who is turned away will feel that he is given a stone instead of bread. But let the rich and learned go among those who need, study their condition, insist on getting the facts and finding out their causes, and he will be reverenced as a son of God. There was never a truer word spoken than this by the Dean of Toynbee Hall: "What the poor need is not your money—it is you." It is possible to give money without love, but no man who loves can stop with giving money; he must also give himself.

There is sorrow in the world. Who shall measure it? "Every heart knoweth its own bitterness." How may we comfort one another in sorrow? Only by entering into the condition of those who suffer. A widowed mother lost her only child; to her life seemed mockery, the idea of God irony. She was told, as she wept over her loved one, "You ought to say, 'Thy will be done.'" Like a tigress she turned on her adviser and said, "Could *you*?" The advice was good, but there was no love behind it. One went to her afterwards and said, "Do not blame yourself if you feel rebellious; your

loss God knows, and He will not blame you for your grief and despair." She turned to that man as to one divinely sent. Because he was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" the world listens to Jesus and heeds His words as they fall like music upon ears that have been hardened by the formalism and professionalism of those without hearts.

Great problems are waiting to be solved; social revolution is threatened in all lands; class rises against class; red-handed anarchy stalks through many capitals; kings sit uneasy on their thrones; and capitalists tremble with all their wealth. Who shall bring in the better order? Those who, having risen toward Christ's altitude, are able to see men and feel toward them as He did; who bear the sorrows of the outcasts, and who will not be comforted while any hearts are breaking. The way of usefulness in this world leads by the cross. If we would relieve the poor, we must love them. If we would put our shoulder under the burdens which others are carrying, their sorrows must be actually ours. If the enmities which exist among individuals and classes are ever to cease, those who have wealth and faculty must give themselves to the service of humanity. If the blessed evangel of dying love is to penetrate all lands, Christians must be willing even to die that their fellow-men may enter into the life of the children of God.

The way of the cross is the way to happiness. Happiness is coveted by all and possessed by few. The poor imagine that they will be happy when they are rich ; those in obscurity, when they occupy great places ; those who are thwarted, when their dreams are realised ; those who are limited, when their limitations are removed. We insist that we must be happy in our way, and lose everything. The only way to happiness is the way of self-sacrifice. He who seeks much for himself will be for ever disappointed. The child can never reach the stars. Few can be rich, and none can keep their riches long. The wealthy cannot buy health with money ; no golden wall rises so high that it will not be scaled by death. Greatness and happiness are not twins. The king is anxious upon his throne, and “the President pays dearly for his White House.”* Responsibility brings anxiety, and anxiety is the enemy of happiness. Where work wears out one, worry wears out thousands. There is less happiness among the great than among the humble, among the rich than among the poor. “But if these limitations could only be removed !” “If I did not have to work so hard !” “If I could be my best self !” “If I could have that for which I know I am fitted !” Ah, greatness of gift always implies greatness of responsibility ; if one limitation goes, another comes ; that which seems to

* Emerson : *Essay on Compensation.*

give freedom only increases slavery. Almost all men, like birds, beat themselves against their cages, longing to get into some different world, to soar beneath some more splendid skies, ignorant of the abysses in that larger world and of the storms which sweep those skies. Of the Master it was said, "Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross." The cross preceded the joy, as the mountain climb is before the vision of the earth and sky. The Stoic said, "The way to be happy is to cease to desire or aspire"; in other words, Deny yourself. Christ's message is, "The way to be happy is the way of the cross. Sacrifice yourself. Make all you possibly can; give every faculty its fullest development; be as beautiful, as cultured, as wise as circumstances will permit, not that you may be happy, but that you may use powers, faculties, gifts, as I have used mine—for humanity. In that way, and that alone, lies happiness." "Then happiness is impossible?" No! happiness is a reality. Every one who does a righteous act finds in that act satisfaction and a measure of joy. If it were possible to put together on one side of a great platform all the missionaries who have gone to the foreign field and on the other side all the men whose fortunes have reached a half-million or more, which group do you think would show the happier faces? A mother is sick with a terrible disease. The other members of the

family give up society, comfort, rest, and watch day and night with their loved one. At last she closes her eyes and goes home, and they say: "Oh, it is such a blessing that we were able to watch with her during her last hours!" I once looked from a college platform where a young man was delivering his Commencement oration, and saw his mother before him drinking in every word he spoke, devouring him with the love in her eyes. She had sacrificed that that son might be educated. When at last the Commencement came, and he stood before an applauding audience, the leader of his class, she hid herself in the crowd and wept for joy—the happiest person in all the room. Travel, luxury, society, millions of money, could not give a thousandth part of the pleasure that thrilled that mother's heart as through her tears she thanked God that her prayers were answered. Happiness is the flower of right. If you are not happy when you are right, you would be unutterably miserable with the consciousness of being wrong. All the joy which does not fade is that which grows from self-sacrifice.

Once more we get back to our Master. He walked this Royal Way of the Holy Cross whether He did things great or small. He became the world's Saviour by His sacrifice. He lost Himself that men might be saved. He never asked for success, friendship, power, appreciation, anything but the privilege of serving

humanity. Life on earth or in heaven would have been hell if the privilege of sacrifice had been taken away. To human eyes when He died there was not the slightest evidence that He had been anything but a failure. He was not only willing to sacrifice, but willing to fail. Many would choose suffering if they could be sure of triumph in the end, but the outlook before Him was not only death but failure.

Because theology put its emphasis upon the sacrifice on Calvary, do not make the mistake of thinking that the cross is only for those who can do great things. All who truly serve their fellow-men are partners in all that Calvary symbolises. We see the quaking earth and the shrouded heavens, and forget that every hour that Jesus lived had its own limitation, and that every moment was a succession of crucifixions. The cross moves into the daily life of every man. Before him open two paths: one leads to wealth and power, the other to obscurity and suffering. The first is a way of ease, self-indulgence, uselessness; the other of struggle, conflict, and blessing.

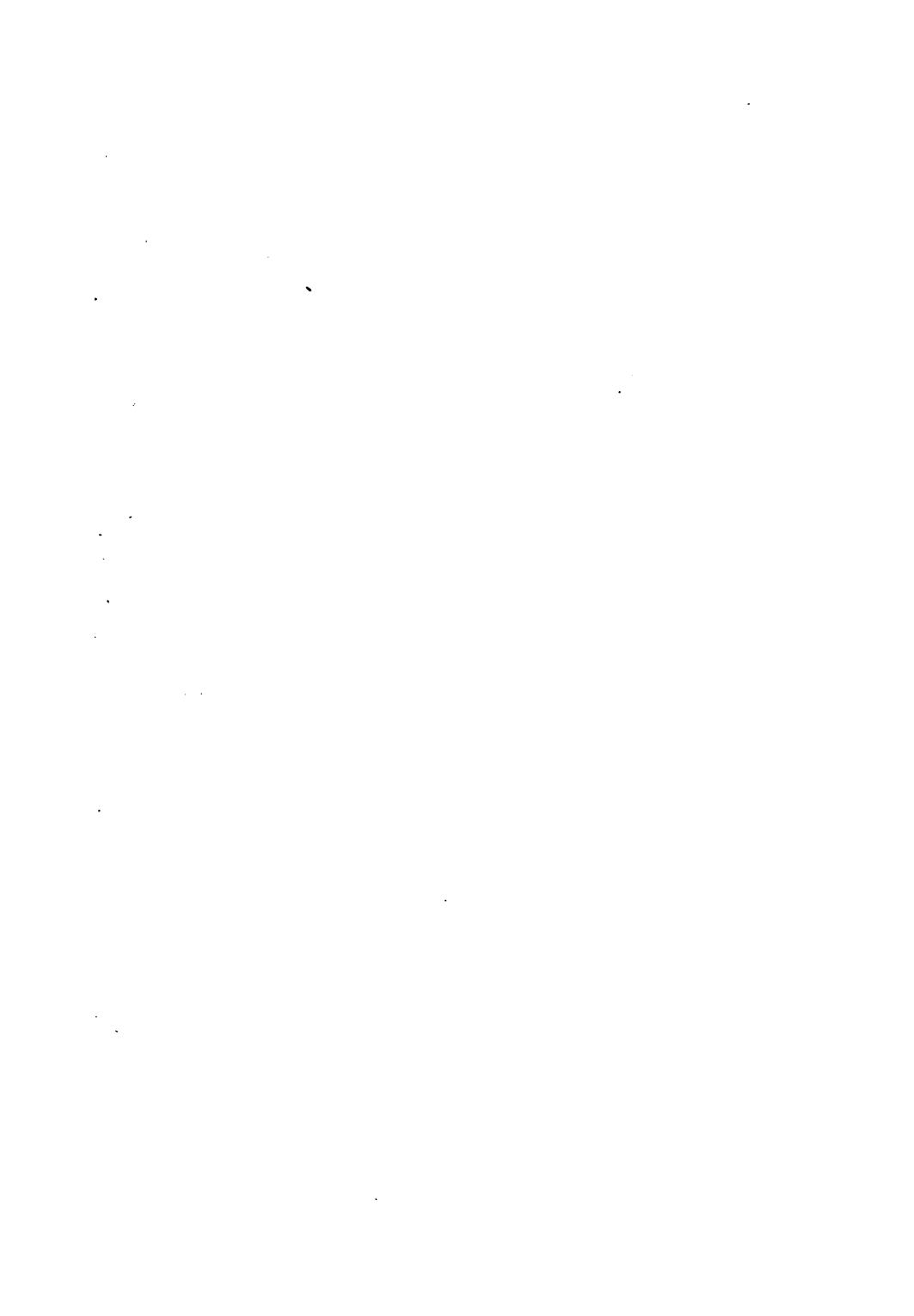
Sickness and limitation shut many in narrow places. "I am no longer of use to any one." "I am only in the way." "I cannot understand how such beautiful and useful persons can die while I am left, nothing but a hindrance." When ambition is sacrificed, and the most made of what we have; when those who are limited

are willing to be small, if God can fill a small place with them ; when those who are sick are willing that God should use them as a means for developing tenderness and helpfulness in those who minister to them, then, according to their ability and opportunity, they will be in holy fellowship with Jesus Christ. You may not understand it, you may resist it, but nothing is clearer than that those who would be happy must cease to seek happiness, and ask only the privilege of giving. The song will rise in our hearts when we cease to live for ourselves, and begin to live for the good that we can do.

The way of the cross is the way of victory. Clouds shut in Calvary when Jesus died, and those who looked toward the mount went shuddering and shivering to their homes, and the short-sighted said, "Now the farce is ended. It will be long before another upstart will seek to overturn the existing order." But from Calvary a light streamed across to Cyprus, to Asia, to Greece ; poured its splendour upon Rome, and rolled around the world. That cross, from being the emblem of shame, has become the symbol of honour. From it have gone inspirations which have thrilled human hearts. Martyrs have died chanting the name of the Crucified. In the old time that for which it stood was abhorred ; in our time it is the symbol of the highest and finest human character. The way of the cross was the path of

victory for the Christ, and the same way is the path of victory for His followers.

How may we get into this Royal Way of the Holy Cross? Forsake all known sin; follow Jesus Christ as you would follow any other trusted leader, and the works which He did shall you do also, and greater works.



VII.

LOVE AND LIFE.



VII.

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“And the greatest of these is love.”
1 CORINTHIANS xiii. 13.

A CHRISTIAN is never so quickly and surely humbled as when he faces the fact that the essence of Christianity is simply and solely love as it is manifested in Jesus Christ. Many can pass muster for orthodoxy whose hearts are as hard and unresponsive as stones. Many bow low before the Christ in bread and wine who grind the face of the Christ in the persons of the weak and poor. There is no real worship except loving acts, and no genuine orthodoxy apart from a self-sacrificing spirit. There is one infallible way for determining growth in grace, and that is, the application of the question, Are we beginning to love with Christlike love? An American evangelist in Scotland, after a sermon of exceptional power, was approached by the venerable Dr. Bonar, who said, “You do love to preach, do you not?” The evangelist replied, “Yes, I do.” Dr. Bonar then asked this searching question: “Do you love men as much as you love to preach?” The Corinthians had asked Paul about spiritual

gifts. He had replied by asserting the reality of the spirit; that as in nature the one life manifests itself in a million forms, so in the realm of spirit there is the same multiplicity of manifestation, and each gift is as important as every other. Having said so much he continues: "But desire earnestly the greater gifts. And a still more excellent way show I unto you." That better thing is described in the thirteenth chapter. It is love. Elsewhere St. Paul says, "Love is the fulfilling of the law." St. Peter says, "Above all things have fervent love among yourselves." St. John lifts the whole subject to the loftiest heights in these words: "God is love. Whosoever loveth is born of God." Our Lord said that the whole law was embodied in "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart . . . and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Then He added a final commandment: "That ye love one another, even as I have loved you." The possession of love is the test of discipleship: "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one toward another." Not one, but all the New Testament writers place love above every other gift, and agree that without it there is no Christianity. This chapter, which is the world's classic on the subject, naturally divides itself into three parts. The first contrasts love with other gifts; the second is a kind of "verbal prism" through which the light of love

is passed, and by which is revealed the elements of which it is composed ; the third shows that love is the greatest and most enduring thing in the world ; while all combined show the relation of love to life.

In the contrast between love and other gifts, notice the strong form of the language used. There is no chance of a possible misunderstanding. Love is greater than eloquence. A man may talk like an angel, but if he is without a loving spirit his life is no more musical than the noise which boys make on old kettles and pans. "Sounding brass," an old brass kettle struck by a stone, that is as much like music as a man without love is like Christ. Eloquence is admired above almost all other gifts. He who can speak to men of God, providence, eternity ; who can paint verbal pictures with Milton, analyse motives with Shakespeare, play upon emotions as an organist on his organ, is the popular idol ; but if there is no love in his heart, the Apostle says, his speech though it be about sacred things is no more acceptable to God than hammering on an old brass pan. That is vigorous talk.

Next, love is contrasted with prophecy, or the power of reading the future ; with knowledge of mysteries, which plainly refers to theology ; and with all knowledge, which includes science and faith. Here language seems utterly inadequate. With one sweep Paul says in effect :

“I may be able to read the future ; I may know everything about the Trinity, the Divinity of Christ, punishment after death, and all the rest of these great subjects ; I may know how the worlds were made ; I may believe that God can save men to the uttermost ; but if I go into a church and find people there that I malign and ignore ; if I go out into the street and have toward the sorrowing and the vicious no consciousness that they are children of God ; even though I pray, sing psalms, am always at church, and am as orthodox as ten thousand creeds can make me, I am nothing. Nothing ! No stronger assertion is possible. In comparison with that love which goes about doing good, comforts the lonely, builds a bridge along which the vile and vicious may walk from the slums to heaven, theology, science, faith, are of no account whatever. Thus moves on the tide of the Apostle’s teaching.

He goes farther, and puts the emphasis on the inner life. One might say, “I cannot *do* anything, therefore I do not love.” That point is carefully guarded. Love is not manifested alone in outward action. A man may feed the poor in order to get a reputation for benevolence ; in a frenzy of enthusiasm he may even be willing to be a martyr, and think only of self and a shining crown ; but even martyrs without love are nothing in comparison with those who feel that humanity in itself is

precious. He who is possessed by that conviction will do good according to opportunity; he who has it not will do good only so long as it will minister to his selfishness. Love is the supreme gift. Mere eloquence is as the sound of brass; theology and science in themselves are nothing; even outward acts of benevolence are of no account. Of this thought the Bible is full. "God so loved the world." "God commendeth His love toward us in that when we were yet sinners," &c. "The love of Christ constraineth us." "If we love one another, God abideth in us." So the music rises and swells like a symphony, and sweeps on toward the consummation in which we catch glimpses of a city whose twelve foundations are precious stones: the first jasper, the second sapphire, the twelfth an amethyst; and the Lamb—love in sacrifice the light which is flashed from their every facet. Love is the diamond among spiritual gifts. Where it is, there Christianity is. "Whosoever loveth is born of God." That explains many things. Our hearts say that certain men who differ from us are not bad men; we load them with denunciation while they live, and extravagantly eulogise them when they die. What does it mean? Simply that, in spite of all theories, the straitest of all sects know that those who truly love are loved of God. Many men are better and many are worse than their creeds. Where Christlike love is, theories

are of comparatively little consequence. What a man is is always more than what he professes.

If the Apostle had left the subject at this point evil might have resulted. Some would have confused love with tenderness or sensibility; they would have imagined that tears are its natural language. But Paul describes the way in which love is manifested, and so leaves no possibility of misunderstanding. Who ever saw love? The blush on the maiden's cheek, the gleam in the young man's eye, the acts of kindly attention, the silent, ceaseless, deathless tenacity with which one friend clings to another—these outward things are visible; but love itself can no more be described than the force which blooms in a rose, makes an orchard a poem in colour, sings in birds, romps in children, and glows and grows in the splendour of the springtime.

In this thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians is found the real offence of the cross. Whatever was true in Paul's time, it is not true now that men are repelled from Christianity because they are unwilling to believe its doctrines; there is nothing in the doctrine of the Trinity, or the most mechanical theory of the Atonement, or in any of the terrific teaching about future punishment which any honest thinker would refuse to accept if once he could be convinced that such teaching is true. The natural heart is not unwilling to receive the

doctrines of Christianity. Men will accept anything that is true if it is to their advantage. But when a truth enters life and presumes to dictate what they shall eat and drink, how they shall behave among their fellows, what they shall talk about, rebellion arises. When a selfish person is told that he must be kind, be willing to give up his luxuries and comforts if by so doing he may help some tramp or beggar; that he must put a bridle on his tongue, and not even think unkindly, then he feels the offence of the cross; then he turns from the Master who taught and lived what pierces his pride to the quick. The offence of the cross in our time is unwillingness to live according to the love of the cross.

Consider these three sentences. “Love suffereth long and is kind.” Abuse, misunderstanding, misrepresentation, may be piled high; the man with love in his heart not only endures it, but is kind. The more Christ was persecuted, the more intensely He manifested His love. “And is kind”—that is a positive word. Some endure obloquy and hard treatment without complaint who will not be kind to those who heap burdens on them. A brute misrepresents me, lies about me—am I kind to him in proportion as he is unjust to me? That is the question that brings presumption to the ground.

“Thinketh no evil.” Love not only does not

injure another by outward act, but does not retain the thought of evil things in the memory. It is one thing to refrain from judging in word—it is vastly different not to judge in thought. This would be a new world if none would think evil of their fellow-men.

“Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth”—that is, is not glad when evil befalls another; never draws a friend aside and says, “Did you hear so-and-so about Mr. B.?” with a manner that cannot conceal satisfaction. “Rejoiceth in the truth”—never makes capital out of others’ faults; never delights in exposing weakness; “endeavours to see things as they are, and rejoices to find them better than suspicion feared or calumny denounced.” *

There is little difference in the average estimate of the glory of the loving character. It is only when men are told “this is what *you* must do” that they rebel. It is one thing to admire the grandeur of a mountain; another to be told to climb to its loftiest peak. Love is the very shining crest and loftiest summit of the Christian life.

Many people ask, “How may I love God?” and have no definite idea of what loving God is. Love for God is proved by obedience to God. If one knows that it is the supreme purpose and effort of his life to do God’s will, that is the only evidence he needs that he loves God. Love

* Drummond’s “Greatest Thing in the World,” p. 89.

is always measured by what one is willing to do for the object of affection. But even this is rather abstract. Jesus never made anything clearer than that love for God is to be determined by appreciation of man. "If a man love not his brother whom he hath seen, he cannot love God whom he hath not seen." We serve God, Jesus says, by clothing the naked and feeding the poor. He who is true to man can never be false to God. The first thing for all to do is to get a correct idea of the value of man. If the fact that God is the Father has its proper place all else will be clear. It follows then that every human being has something divine in him. That drivelling wretch is my brother—I must help him; that fellow with a plausible story but a villainous face is God's child; he may lie to me, but the Father is seeking for him and I must help the wanderer to his home; that little dirty-faced, untamable boy has something in him that reaches back to the throne of God and forward into eternity, therefore nothing done for him can be wasted. If there is nothing in that brute of a man but wounds and putrifying sores let him die, but if within that ruined body is an immortal spirit, then nothing that will help him to himself is too costly for us. The first step in this pathway of love is the realisation that all are the children of God. After that about all that need be said is that men must learn to love by

doing loving things, just as they grow strong physically by the exercise of their muscles. Sometimes a man undertakes work for others simply to drown sorrow; in a little while interest is aroused; then enthusiasm; until from the service of those who needed love, love has grown.

But, after all, who can describe the genesis of love? Who can tell where the life in an elm tree comes from? Who knows what makes the flowers fragrant, and the birds to sing? The flowers are fragrant and the birds sing because somewhere in the universe is a fountain of life, and men love because somewhere in the universe there is One who is a fountain of love. This has never been so beautifully stated as by the Apostle John: "We love—because He first loved us."

Love is the greatest thing in the world. It is the most lasting. Paul spoke about prophecies. There are no prophets now in the old sense, and yet in those days every mother longed to have her son a prophet. Then there was a gift called "tongues." In our time it is not known whether that gift was the ability to speak a foreign language without having learned it, or a state of spiritual ecstasy. Knowledge also shall be done away. Nothing has been more evanescent than knowledge. Already the Encyclopaedia Britannica has passed through nine editions, and every one has been an

improvement on its predecessor. Language is in a state of constant change. Ptolemy was sure that the earth was stationary and that the sun moved around it. The science of yesterday is the foolishness of to-day. The text-books of our childhood have all been supplanted by others. Even Mr. Darwin ten years after his death is no longer the chief exponent of Darwinism.

As in science, so is it in theology. Whether it be a fact of good omen or not, the theology of to-day is not that of the last century. Religion can no more be expressed in the terms of the Westminster Confession than astronomy in Ptolemaic language. Everything earthly is in a state of flux—mountains are being taken to the plains; the ocean is encroaching on the continents; empires fall; prophecies are fulfilled; science takes on new forms; theology adjusts itself to its environment—but love never faileth. Faith, hope, and love abide, but love is the greatest; for God is love, and all who love enter into the life of God. He that loveth is born of God. Those only truly live who are in harmony with God. The life “of love and sacrifice is the ageless life.”* The sun shines, the rains fall, the harvests come, the constellations sweep the spaces, and one law binds all events, all ages, all forces into harmony. Nothing is at enmity with love. A little child

* “The Mind of the Master.” John Watson, D.D.

loving his mother is so far like God ; a mother bound by affection to her child is so far like God ; two lovers, if their devotion is pure, are in a way like God ; a woman leaving a home of culture and wealth to help those who can give nothing in return is so far like God ; the man giving his wealth to build a church where the Gospel may be preached, to found a library, to open a fountain, to help to a sweeter and finer life those who have little to inspire, is so far like God. Mrs. Judson sailed for India almost alone to teach the Gospel to those who never heard of Jesus ; love took her there—and God is love. Whittier saw in the black man in southern rice-swamps his brother ; love tuned his song—and God is love. A good woman knew that even London cabmen were children of the Heavenly Father, and she sought for them protection from storm and cold ; love inspired her ministry—and God is love. Love can never grow old, because God cannot.

This is the theme on which the preacher can dwell and never exaggerate. This is the test to which at last all must come. I have sometimes thought that the judgment-seat of Christ is not a great white throne, but simple, pure, and perfect love, and that when men are to be judged no word will be spoken, no sound be heard, but still as the air, impalpable as the light, love will shine around them, and if they love, their little lives will blend with the larger

love, but if they are selfish, their true characters in all their discord will simply be made manifest.

Let us press home this question until it is answered. Do we love with just a little of the love which was in Christ? Do we act toward those around us as if they were the children of God? Are we using our money chiefly for ourselves, or to make men happier and better? Are we using our strength in the service of those who need it, or wasting it in feasting and folly?

“Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was an hungry, and ye gave Me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took Me in; naked, and ye clothed Me; I was sick, and ye visited Me; I was in prison, and ye came unto Me.” Blessed are the men whom these words truly describe!

VIII.

FAITH FOR OUR TIME.



VIII.

FAITH FOR OUR TIME.

“Watch ye, stand fast in the faith.”

1 CORINTHIANS xvi. 13.

If such discrimination were proper, it might be said that the Epistles of St. Paul to the Corinthians deserve the most careful study of any of his writings, because they have in them more that appeals to the universal human experience. The members of the Church of Corinth lived in circumstances more like our own than the members of any other church to which he addressed letters. They had the training and kind of knowledge which a great seaport with its cosmopolitan life is sure to give. Nature did more for them than she has done for most people. The sensuous beauty of that southern clime, with the wonderful influence of its seas and mountains, was not the smallest factor in their environment. Corinth was a large city, its population was heterogeneous, and came from many lands. Jews, Greeks, Romans, sailors, philosophers, poets, artists, merchants, jostled each other in the streets. Next to Rome it was the most cosmopolitan city in the world. It was full of the conceit of culture.

Its citizens imagined that they were more learned than the Athenians, and its schools of rhetoric presumed that wisdom had spoken her final word through them. The Corinthians were in danger of substituting worldly ideals for the pure and lofty standards which were taught by Christ and His Apostles. Our text is a part of an exhortation by St. Paul urging them to live godly lives in the midst of a civilisation which was sure to rebuke every attempt to improve the existing social order. Without seeking to analyse what Paul here meant by "the faith," observe certain truths which were surely included in that faith, which the people of that time were in danger of neglecting, and which those in our time are in quite as great peril of forgetting.

"Stand fast in the faith"—what faith?

The faith that man is essentially spirit. As years advance, as the analogies between the human body and the bodies of animals are better understood; as the fact is faced that most human beings come into existence accidentally; as the remorselessness of death is considered; it is almost impossible for the man who thinks not to ask with a great deal of eagerness whether the teaching of his childhood is not a beautiful but baseless dream. It is not a dream, but a sublime fact, and Christianity rests upon the foundation that man is spirit. He is allied by his body to the lower creation,

but he himself is not physical, is not subject to physical laws, has no reason to dread death—in short, is spirit. If, at this point, any one asks for argument the reply is that the object of this sermon is not argument, but the presentation and emphasis of truths which lie at the foundation of the Christian faith. Paul found a law in his members warring against the law of his mind ; he was like an eagle seeking to rise into the clear splendour of the upper air, while his animal nature bound him to things which he hated. The spirit was in daily battle with the body. To the Corinthians he put the question, “Know ye not that your bodies are temples of the Holy Ghost ?” But the most significant of his utterances on this theme is in the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians, in which in magnificent words he declares that the end of the long battle between the flesh and the spirit is in the triumph of the latter. Death is swallowed up in victory. The figure suggests the writer standing upon a mountain and beholding death, which is the culmination of the physical, swallowed up in engulfing waters. As the hideous form disappears nothing remains but pure spirit. That is a sublime picture ! This teaching is fundamental. If a man realises that he is spirit he will reach after the life of the spirit ; if he believes that he is only an animal he will live an animal life, and justify himself in doing so. Nay, more, if he believes that he is only matter

he will feel no responsibility, acknowledge no brotherhood that is vital, look forward to no existence higher than the present. As a consequence in most cases the poetry of life will disappear, and the shades of the prison-house lengthen with each new day. No exercise can be more beneficent than the practise of the consciousness than we are spirits. I look out upon a lake, deep-blue like the sky, and feel that there is something in me that finds no answer there ; the trees have voices, and I listen to their various music, but there are moods in my life that no message from the trees ever reach ; the trees shed their leaves, and the flowers decay and fall, and so we pass, but somehow I cannot identify myself with lake or forest or flower. And yet many are trying to bring themselves to some such dreary belief, which would lead to the destruction of faith, the banishment of hope, and the annihilation of the basis on which morality must build. No eye has seen a spirit, but all may be conscious that they are spirits. This consciousness should be cultivated. Stand fast in this faith. If the body is allied to the animals, man himself is related to the infinite Spirit.

Stand fast in the faith that each man is free. The fundamental truth of religion is that man is a spirit. That goes before the reality of God, since because we are spirits we know God. If we are not spirits we can have no more idea of

God than a rock can have of the music of the spheres. This shows that the effect of false philosophy may be as pernicious as that of false religion. If I am a spirit I may rise to the inference that there is a Father of Spirits; if I am not a spirit, I should infer and aspire no more than other *things*. Following this point, and equally important, is the realisation of freedom. Every individual is so constituted that he may decide for himself what his character shall be. I do not say decide what he will *do*, for a man may choose one thing and be compelled to do another. What is done voluntarily is a revelation of character. What is done from compulsion simply shows that for the time one is in the hands of a resistless force. No one blames himself for doing what he is compelled to do, and no one else blames him for so doing. We condemn ourselves when we choose that which we know to be wrong. A man is free when he may choose either right or wrong. If he cannot choose, there is no right and no wrong, and no such thing as moral action. There is in our time a rather unusual tendency toward belief that men are not free. The study of heredity without reference to other equally evident facts leads directly to fatalism. The old Calvinistic theology, with its highly moral motives, knocked the foundation from under morality by its emphasis on the doctrine of Election. Many persons are still living under

the shadow of teaching which says that what men do was ordained from the foundation of the world. Then the Diety is responsible for human conduct, not those who have no choice. On all sides we hear words like these : "It makes no difference what we do, it will all be the same in the end." "When my time comes I shall die." This tendency in thought works bitter ruin, because it leads to justification of wrong-doing, especially sensuality. Men say that they were born as they are, that they do not and cannot choose their courses, but are impelled to them. There is some truth in this statement. No man chooses his heredity ; nor has he any chance to say where he would like to be born or how he would be trained—but still freedom is also a fact, and that it is fundamental and indestructible consciousness certifies. You ask why this is so greatly emphasized? Because there will be no attempt to do right, and no strenuous resistance of wrong, when men believe that righteousness is beyond their reach, and that the battle against evil tendency is hopeless. No man fights when he knows that he must fail. If we are not free, then we do what we must, and whether we lie or steal, sacrifice or love, the moral quality of our acts is the same. Not free? A burglar enters a house ; is detected ; to make his escape shoots and kills the father of a family. Do not blame that burglar ; he did what he must do. Not

free? Against the background of lofty snow-peaks and barren rocky precipices is lifted a little wooden cross. A broken-hearted mother kneels there and prays. "Poor, silly thing!" someone says; and someone else: "How touching!" But if she is not free she is only doing what she must, and is unworthy either of praise or blame. That person is in infinite peril who begins to argue that he is impelled to his conduct by inherited tendencies which are resistless. High standards of conduct are dependent upon a keen consciousness of freedom. Every man is free to choose. Therefore character is not something ready-made and to be put on like a garment, but something which every man makes for himself. Destiny in a certain real sense is the result of individual choice.

"Stand fast in the faith." What faith? Faith in the moral order of the world. Notice the progression in the thought. Men are spirits, allied to that which is above; they are free, therefore appeals can be made to them to choose the right and to avoid the wrong; they are the subjects of a moral order. What does that mean? To say that we live in a physical order is only saying that we inhabit a world in which if we leap from a precipice we will be dashed in pieces; if we inhale foul gases we will be made sick; if we are fastened in a burning building we will be burned. No man can get out of the physical order. The laws of nature

are everywhere ; if they are obeyed they become servants ; if they are disobeyed they destroy. If a skipper puts his rudder one way the wind will fill his sails ; if he puts it another the same wind will send him to the bottom of the sea. Now while our bodies are subject to the physical order our spirits are subject to the moral order. The moral laws are as universal and regular as the movement of the tides or the sweep of the stars. This moral order manifests itself in two ways : in the lives of individuals, and in the movement of society. The distinction between truth and error, between right and wrong, is clear, universal and eternal. Righteousness always brings blessing ; wrong-doing is always followed by suffering. If one leaps overboard in mid-ocean he cannot expect that the waters will suddenly become buoyant ; but he might as wisely do so as to imagine that he can believe a lie or commit a crime and escape loss and misery. This is the one way in which the moral order of the world appears. The other way is in the fact that all things are moving toward blessing, and every flower, every tree, every waterfall, every mountain, and the combined action of all individuals, however evil their courses may be when taken singly, together work out an evident purpose of love. A thousand discords may form a noble harmony, and this world is so arranged that a thousand evil lives may work toward a beneficent and blessed society. No thanks to

the individual ; all thanks to Him who turns even evil into a minister of benefit. The moral order is as real and as inexorable as the physical. Everywhere and for ever truth and right issue in blessing ; everywhere error and wrong end in misery and death. And yet in spite of all antagonisms events are so overruled that each year the race moves steadily and gloriously onward and upward. No wrong goes unpunished. The politician may buy votes, or he may sell the welfare of the community for the success of his party, and say that the end justifies the means. It does not, and sometime he will learn that his crime is of the same nature as that of Judas. Others may imagine that things done in the dark are hidden ; but the darkness hides nothing ; the day in which all things shall be revealed swiftly approaches, and retribution and judgment are as inexorable in the moral as in the physical order. The first man disobeyed, and was cast out of the garden ; the chosen people forgot Jehovah, and became a by-word among the nations. On the other hand the Apostles were persecuted, but those who died unknown are now leading the procession of the nations. On the very spot near Constance where John Huss was burned a monument is raised to his memory. The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church. Never imagine that this moral order will make an exception of any one. Never dream that secret sin is

unknown to your fellow men, much less to God. Never lose heart because work is not appreciated—all good work tells some time. Above all, never for one moment, because one individual or a million go wrong, think that the end of all things is to be collapse. To see Godless nations and individuals receiving their merited doom, and then to find that each new century lifts the race nearer the “one far-off divine event,” is to make belief in Providence imperative. The moral order is proven by science, by scripture, by history, and every man who turns his eye inward sees in the depths of his own consciousness something more wonderful than the starry heavens above.

“Stand fast in the faith”—what faith? Faith in man as a *spirit*; one who is always *free* to choose as he will, and yet who is the *subject of a moral order* from which he can never escape; and still more, stand fast in absolute confidence and gladness in the Divine grace. An eminent Christian thinker recently said: “It is time to bring back into our English speech the good old word ‘grace.’”* The word matters little, but the fact of which that word is the symbol distinguishes Christianity. “Man is a spirit.” “Yes,” says natural religion; “yes,” says the profoundest philosophy; “yes,” say Buddha, Zoroaster, Mahommed. “Man is free.” “Yes,” philosophy says again; “yes,” say all schools of

* Rev. P. T. Forsyth, D.D., Cambridge, England.

morals which have any place for the idea of duty. "Man is in a moral order." "Yes," say all religions equally with the Christian, for all declare that righteousness ends in blessing and wickedness in misery. But suppose that this free spirit has violated the moral order from which he cannot escape; suppose he has preferred to follow a lie; in the place of purity has chosen to be impure, and instead of honour has chosen dishonour. Is he only like a man falling from a precipice? Is there no fate for him but to be dashed in pieces? "Nature never overlooks a mistake," says the materialist; "not until a man has achieved goodness by his own strength can he be good," say most of the religions; but our Master, the Christ, uttered a Divine truth when He represented the prodigal coming to himself and finding that his father had never ceased to long for his return. "No escape from moral law as there is none from physical law," say all other teachers; but that Man of Nazareth says, "Though you have done wrong and deserve nothing but suffering, yet you are in the hands of One who for His own sake cannot allow any to perish who are willing to be saved." Nature is beneficent as well as just. It is as much a Divine law that one who repents shall be treated as if he had not first chosen sin, as that he who so chooses and continues in wrong-doing shall perish. This is the message that all men need. Men know their guilt,

and it is difficult for them to believe that there is any way out of the abyss into which they have fallen. But there is. Jesus Christ lived in this world to make every one understand that no one is so utterly lost, so absolutely undeserving, but what all that the cross symbolises—sacrifice even unto death—will be used to bring him to his true life. If there is one message more Christian than another it is that which declares that though the moral law is inexorable those who repent and turn from their wrong are subject to another law—the law of grace, which says that when the vilest forsakes his evil and seeks a new life all the energy of God is on the side of the penitent. That is the message for the prisons and the slums, for the outcast and the desolate. That is the truth for those who have committed great sins, and whose hearts are being consumed with anxiety and remorse. Such persons are all about us. Those who can read human eyes see revealed in them strange secrets. In the ears of all men sounds this great word “grace,” which means, You deserve nothing, but out of pure love your Father offers you a new chance and Divine strength. God is what Christ was when He prayed for those who crucified Him. Trust Him. You can do nothing; but you may accept what He gives.

These are some of the elements of the faith for which all Christians should stand. They

may have been in the mind of Paul when he wrote to the Corinthians, and they may not; they would be a part of his message if he were speaking to-day. As they are appreciated life will be happy and fruitful; without them, joy, hope, usefulness are impossible.

Stand fast in this faith—let nothing shake it: *Man is a spirit*; the body is his house; his true companionship is with spirits; death belongs to matter; life is the quality of spirits.

Man is free. He can choose as he will. If circumstances bind him to the earth his love and choice can take hold of truth and right, and no power can break their grasp.

Man is in a moral order. He realises his being only as he does right and follows truth; truth and right bring peace and joy; error and wrong are for ever tied to misery.

But no man is so utterly lost that he may not, if he only will, receive strength to conquer all the tendencies that drag him down, and such an illumination of mind and heart as will assure him that nothing can separate him from the love of God.

To conclude, then, once more remember: That you are a spirit; that you are free; that you are in a moral order; that God is gracious, and there is pardon and strength for all who repent and follow Jesus Christ.



IX.

**THE CHURCH A SOCIETY OF
SAVIOURS.**



IX.

THE CHURCH A SOCIETY OF SAVIOURS.

“As Thou didst send Me into the world, even so sent I them into the world.”—JOHN xvii. 18.

THESE words are a part of the prayer of our Lord for His disciples just before His betrayal. The Supper had been eaten, and the shadow of impending calamity rested upon the company. The spirit of the Master was heavy as He drew near to Gethsemane and Calvary. For the last time during His earthly ministry He was alone with His disciples, and the words which He spoke to them were of the nature of a final exhortation. This prayer from beginning to end is the loftiest utterance in the Holy Scriptures. In that sacred hour when He was speaking what He desired to have His disciples remember for their inspiration and guidance after He had gone; when He looked into the future and saw what trials would press upon them, He commended His companions to His Father and their Father, and spoke the words of our text: “As Thou didst send Me into the world, even so sent I them into the world.” Similar words were uttered after the crucifixion and resurrection. The disciples were in an

upper room thinking of the One who had gone ; trying to understand their situation without Him who for months had been more than friend and brother, when suddenly He appeared in their midst. No door opened to admit Him ; as a pure spirit He stood in their presence, and said, " Peace be upon you. As the Father hath sent Me, even so send I you." Here we have the charter of the Christian Church. The disciples of Christ are the subjects of a Divine commission ; they are sent by their Master to continue His ministry ; that which He was they are to be. This text is susceptible of but one rational explanation. It distinctly states that when the Master left the earth He committed to His disciples His ministry ; that which He had been they were to be ; that which He had left incomplete they were to carry on to completion. In this intercessory prayer He says, " I pray not for these only, but for those who shall believe on Me through their word." Thus He links together His disciples in all centuries, and makes the text refer to us as truly as to those to whom it was first spoken.

In these days when the Church is confused with forms and ceremonies, with creeds and rituals, when we ask, What shall we believe ? when speculation is crowding itself into the place that belongs to life, it is well to heed that Divine declaration : " As Thou didst send Me into the world, even so sent I them into the

world." This prayer would never have been offered had there not been a vital relation between the Master and His followers. Christ's work is God's work, and yet ours. The Church is not a human society; it is a communion of those who have received the Divine life. They may all hold the same creed, or they may not; they may worship in the same or in different forms. The Church is not a club. It is God in human hearts, doing the same things which He did in Jesus of Nazareth. Did He go about doing good? So will His followers. Was He sensitive to suffering and sorrow? Was it impossible for Him not to attract the sick, blind, deaf, and those possessed with devils? There is a similar sensitiveness and attraction in those in whom He dwells. Was His life in union with the Father, so that He could say, "Not My will, but Thine"? In like manner His followers lift up weak hands and breaking hearts, and cry in His words, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt." God has never been absent from the world. Therefore ours is not only a Divine, but a world-old and world-wide ministry. The same Spirit who brooded upon the face of the waters "in the beginning," who inspired prophets and psalmists, who descended upon Jesus of Nazareth, the Spirit of the Day of Pentecost, the Spirit who in these times is convicting of

sin and leading beneath larger horizons and into fuller knowledge, has never been absent from humanity. The saving of men is an eternal process.

Christians are in the world to be what Christ was, and to do what He did. He came to save, to comfort, to bring in better conditions; but before all these, to live in and before men the very life of God, so that they might have at least some dim idea of what the Divine is, of a higher realm, and of the Father who claims all for that which is lovely and good. Our true destiny is not realised in eating, drinking, marrying, giving in marriage, and then dying, but there is that within all which has kinship with something better and more enduring. Into the darkness of humanity which was brutalised there came One who lived the essential life of the eternities. The mission of Christ in the world was to be light in darkness, joy in sorrow, God in humanity. The principle of the Incarnation is of universal application. Words are only symbols; the fact must be known before the word can convey meaning. Christ on the earth is God in humanity, revealing not only His own existence, but making clear the noble possibilities of man; He is God among men, claiming them for higher things. How can we be as God in the world? We need not inquire. Suppose the reflector in a lighthouse lantern were to ask, "How can I reflect the light in the

midst of this waste of waters with the fury of midnight storms beating upon me?" The answer would be, "You have nothing to do except to keep your surface polished in order that the light may be reflected. Keep yourself right, and the light will do the rest." Christians are reflectors of God. It is their duty to keep clear and clean that upon which the Divine glory shines, so that its radiance may reach into all dark places. When they turn from evil and open their hearts to God His light shines from them, and others see in them something of Him. Christians who realise their name and privilege show in their time what God is; they live on the earth the very life of the Eternal.

Christ was a Saviour from pain and misery. In the fullest and truest sense He became man, fathomed the depths of suffering, not from curiosity, but for the purpose of bearing burdens. He is called "the Burden-Bearer," "the Great Physician." He went about doing good; He was sensitive to all that is human. There have been misunderstandings concerning the teachings of Christ, and controversy concerning the mystery of His person, but neither concerning what He came to do. Theologians and mechanics are in accord when they speak of His work. Differences arise only when some one attempts to get back of facts. Those in sorrow turn to His words; when death breaks the unity of human

homes no music is so sweet as that which fell from His lips ; when poverty grinds the faces of the poor, they lift themselves in rebellion against social conditions, cry out against the State and the Church, but cheer to the echo the name of Him whom many do not hesitate to call "the first great Socialist." With all the exaggeration and extravagance with which His life has been interpreted humanity gathers around Him as the One who, more than any other, has lived for the purpose of alleviating suffering, healing disease, bringing better social conditions, and completing the life of man. What He was His followers are intended to be. Thousands in this world are magnetic to suffering ; they attract it as mountains attract storms. Why do some have the poor and sick ever at their elbows ? Because in them there is something like Christ. The Church exists to save men from suffering, poverty, disappointment, from everything which works misery ; and when salvation is impossible, to bring comfort and strength, so that evils which cannot be removed may be endured. Think of *that* Man going into those homes and among those people with this sole thought : How may I be a blessing to the sick and sorrowing ? How may I get my shoulder under the burdens which are crushing hope and joy out of these my brothers ? What is needed in this time, when men are asking whether the foundations of faith and the social order are not break-

ing ; whether there is any God and any eternal life ; whether the Bible is different from other books, is such a revelation of God in humanity as was seen when the Master walked the earth. Nothing can resist Divine life. Do not let us limit the charter under which we work. We are called to be the world's saviours ; not only to save individual sinners from the future penalties of sin, but to make conditions into which men may grow, so that their tears will be fewer, their hunger less pressing, the sights they see cleaner, the thoughts they think purer. We are ordained to go to those in the grasp of deadly disease, and show that though disease may not be cured, it may be turned into blessing. We are to realise, and help others to do likewise, that loss of wealth cannot separate from the love of God ; that houses and lands may go, and the losers be the gainers. Hear that word ringing down the centuries, "Even so send I you." Sorrow and trial, suffering and sin are close by us as we walk the streets ; they crowd their way into our very houses. "Even so send I you," not simply to bind up the broken-hearted, but to find the broken-hearted. Heavenly things can be manifested only through things earthly. Human sympathy is the medium through which the Divine works. God binds up broken hearts with human hands. Not to dispute about what no one understands, but to go as Christ did, gracious and full of compassion, among the poor

and sick, wherever there are those without the faculty to get along, and work with them—that is the mission of the Christian. The Church is not for heaven, but for earth. Eternity will be all right if we make time right. Think what the world was with one Saviour in it! Think what it would be with a thousand saviours in it! Think what one Man has done to scatter darkness, reveal truth, bring in love! Think what this world would be if all who bear the Christian name, in palace and hovel, among cultured and ignorant, had His spirit, and were serving as He served! Ring out the old selfishness! Ring in the new Christlikeness! The Christian Church is a society of saviours, and if it is a society of saviours, each member of it ought to be an individual saviour.

The supreme object which brought our Master to the earth was the giving of life to those who were dead in sin. “I came that they might have life, and have it abundantly.” “His name shall be called Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins.” His disciples are called to fellowship with Him in saving individuals and society from sin. I am not able to find from a study of the New Testament that His work in salvation was essentially unlike that which belongs to His disciples. It was different in degree, but not in character. Of course I am speaking now solely of the human side. We do not know what Christ achieved in His

relation to God or to the government of the universe. Speaking, therefore, only of what we know concerning His work, we ask, How did He treat individual sinners? Among His first disciples was a publican named Matthew, who was chosen not only to be a disciple, but to put into words the Gospel story and send it down the centuries. Publicans, almost to a man, were extortioners, cruel, heartless. One day Jesus saw this man, and, so far as we know, simply said to him, "Follow Me." The magnetism in the Master gave wings to His words. He entered into no argument, and not a word of denunciation was spoken. The only explanation of the effect on Matthew is that he heard some one speaking to him who had sympathy for him.

At another time He was in the house of a rich publican, who probably had invited Him for purposes of amusement, when a poor woman crept up behind Him as He reclined at table, broke a box of precious ointment upon His feet, and then in passion and misery, as hot tears followed the ointment, grasped her long hair and tried to wipe them away. The men who looked on treated the scene as men usually do. One said, "Now we know what sort of a man this is, since He allows such a woman to be familiar with Him." Another—Judas—said, "This is a waste; why was not this ointment sold and the money given to the poor?" But

the Master, looking behind the act, and thinking only of the loneliness and longing in that woman's heart, gave her His blessing, and in tones of wondrous pathos said, "She hath done what she could."

Peter had declared that though all others should forsake the Master he never would, and yet when the first stress came, quickly and with an oath he denied that he ever knew Him. That was the kind of sin that arouses indignation. Jesus passed Peter soon after the denial, and knowing his peculiar temperament, without speaking a word simply looked at him. The two did not meet again until after the resurrection, when the Master appeared to him, and asked three times the question, "Lovest thou Me?" The human way would have been to say, "When Peter makes amends for his wrong he will be welcomed back, but it is for him to take the first step." Instead, however, the familiar voice, in tones which he could never forget, in which were pleading and pent-up love and infinite desire, asked, "Lovest thou Me?" In His dealing with sinners the Master never once had a word of reproof for those who were weak and longed for something better. Only for Pharisees who paraded their obstinacy as if it were a virtue did He have quick and sharp rebuke. The true way to reach one who has done wrong is by the path of sympathy, to see in the man something better than his act.

When Michael Angelo was called to Florence by the Medicis, he was given a block of marble at which another artist had worked and which he had thrown aside; but Angelo saw in that stone possibilities of glorious beauty, and from it chiselled an immortal statue. Jesus saw in sinning men possibilities of virtue and happiness, and His voice thrilled with sympathy as to the sleeping manhood, to the unconscious child of God, He called and bade him come forth.

We have asked, How did Jesus work with sinners? Let us go farther and inquire, How did He sacrifice for them? Remember we have nothing to do with any relation which His death may have had to the Deity or the Divine government. How did He sacrifice? By entering fully into the condition of those whom He would reach. That can be explained only by analogies. No one really understands what it is to enter the condition of another, but we may get hints from illustrations.

A millionaire is desirous of reclaiming a human wreck whom he sees drifting along the streets of some great city. Every effort he makes is repulsed. At last he says, "That man must really know how much I love him, and he cannot while I am in comfort and he is in misery. I will give up my wealth, be poor as he is, even be a tramp by his side. I will eat where he eats and what he eats; I will

sleep in the places which he haunts ; his companions shall be my companions.” That would be something like the sacrifice of Christ.

In the old days of slavery it was easy to tell the slaves that they ought to be Christians, but how could they believe in God when they saw their families torn asunder and sent east and west, north and south? How could a mother believe in God when she saw her child torn from her arms by those who professed to be religious? How could the child believe in God when he saw his father chained to a hundred other slaves and sent out of his sight? How could a husband believe in God when he saw his wife beaten until her back was raw? But suppose the love of Christ had really gotten hold of one of those old planters so that he felt for those poor creatures the same compassion that Jesus felt; suppose that when he conversed with them they had said, “Oh, it is very well for you to talk to us about God ; you have a splendid house, and a beautiful family which nothing can harm except death, but how can we believe in Him ?” Brooding over these things at length the planter says, “There is no way in which I can make these men believe in the God who is my Father and their Father except by becoming literally one of them.” And so he sells his house, leaves his family, and becomes a slave to work in the field, to endure privation, to be whipped without cause, to suffer the ills of

slavery. At last he can go to the slaves and say, "What you suffer I suffer, and I still point you to Him who bears griefs and carries sorrows; who is smitten and afflicted for us." That would be a sacrifice something like Christ's. He came into the human condition—not to homes of wealth and refinement, for then He would have had no power over the common people; but He became a mechanic, a working man; He had no home that He could call his own, was lonely; those about Him did not appreciate Him—probably called Him "crank" and all sorts of hard names. The endurance of opprobrium was part of His sacrifice. He went to the bottom of humanity. Those who follow Him are called to have the same spirit. If men are reached they must be found, and they cannot be found where they are not. The Society of Saviours is composed of those who when they realise their privilege sympathise for all who sin, and are willing to follow the example of Him who became poor, who entered into sorrow that He might relieve it, who was willing to be a slave and be beaten until His back ran blood if so be He could save the souls of slaves.

I understand well the questions which may here arise. You cannot ask them more intensely than I have asked them. How is it possible to realise the fulness of this thought? It is not possible; we cannot comprehend it; all

we can do is to submit to Him who is the Life, and who, growing in us, will some time get entire possession, so that we shall walk the earth no more ourselves, children of corruption, with desires reaching downward and binding to unholy things, but we shall walk as children of God, with the breath of heaven upon our brows, with the love of God and the vision of Divine opportunities ever before us. And we must not be discouraged by the greatness of that to which we are called. Let us imagine a dialogue between the winter sun and the sleeping grass and flowers. The sun says: "Come forth; it is time you were beginning to make beautiful the earth. The landscape must have a carpet of green, and the gardens and hillsides be embroidered with lilies and roses." And two or three little spears of grass which have just managed to get above the surface of the cold soil reply: "How can you expect that we will ever fill this great world with beauty? There is no fragrance in us, and there are only two or three of us all told; we can hardly protect ourselves from the chill of this wintry air." But the sun pours upon the ground its warmth and light, and by-and-by the two or three spears of grass are multiplied a thousand and a million fold, and almost before they realise it the landscape is green, and the gardens and hillsides blossom with beauty. It has come from the warmth, the light, and the falling of rains. If

we ask how we can take up and carry on the work of Christ in saving the world we may be discouraged. We cannot do it, but we can hold our hearts open to the inspirations of God, and, as the splendour and energy of the sun palpitating across the abyss of nearly a hundred millions of miles focus themselves upon tiny bulbs and single blades of grass until the whole earth is transformed, so the love and power of God will reach even the humblest of humanity, and entering all open hearts make individuals holy and beautiful, and through them will regenerate the world. What has been will be. The purest have been chosen for loftiest ministries. Matthew the publican became a biographer of the Son of God; Peter the fisherman, who was at one time a traitor, became an apostle, and will live for ever in the world's gratitude. Luther, the miner's son, the beggar boy, revolutionised Europe and the world. Wesley, the son of an obscure preacher, was the inspiration of "the evangelical revival." General Booth, who was no longer desired in his own church, led in the formation of new activities which are well called "the Holy Army." There are drudgery, sacrifice, misunderstandings, contumely, defeat, death, but what are these in comparison with the joy that is set before us? What Christ was men are intended to be; not simply bundles of passions and frailties bound to things unworthy, but

men in whom Divine life will for ever grow. This message thrills its way down the centuries —we are to be fellow-workers with the eternal Father, with those who dwell in spheres of light, with the Master whose holy feet walked the valleys and trod the hills of Palestine, with the prophets and martyrs of all ages. He was the world's Saviour; according to their ability and opportunity all His followers will be saviours. To all men, all women, all children, everywhere, who make a place in their hearts for the Master to dwell, come the great words of our Lord: “As the Father hath sent Me into the world, even so send I you.” “Receive ye the Holy Ghost.”

X.

THE GOAL OF THE CREATION.

X.

THE GOAL OF THE CREATION.

"Till we all come . . . unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

EPH. iv. 13.

A CHILD can ask questions which a philosopher cannot answer. The humblest often have thoughts which take hold of the profoundest problems. Great thinkers have no patent on great ideas. Philosophy is only an extended study along lines of thinking which tradesmen and artisans are pursuing quite as eagerly as professors and preachers. Mothers are the first philosophers, for to them first comes the consciousness of the solemn mystery of life. Socrates and Kant elaborated in the sphere of thought ideas which long before came to millions of mothers through their affections. Among the questions which will never cease, and which keep thrusting themselves on our consideration, is one which we will make the theme of our study—What is the goal of the Creation? To what are all things tending? Plato held that back of visible objects are abstract ideas, and that things which come to pass are only the expression or manifestation of

something which had pre-existence in abstract thought. If we could see God's thought concerning the Creation what should we behold? Who has not asked, Will things always remain as they are, or is the Creation itself a continuous process not yet complete? The doctrine of evolution points toward a far-off golden age; and we ask, What will be the condition of things when evolution is finished and man has reached his final state? Thoughtful men can never be content with things as they are, but ever inquire concerning what is to be. This tendency is illustrated in the world's literature. The great poets have had visions of a future in which the processes now at work will be completed. Philosophers have dreamed of ideal states which were only their conception of what the race will some time attain. The Bible is as full of this thought as is any other book. The prophecies of Isaiah thrill with ideals of a time in which swords shall be beaten into plowshares, spears into pruning-hooks, and in which there shall be none to hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain. The Epistles of Paul throb with prophecies of coming glory. In Romans, Ephesians, and Corinthians they appear again and again; while the sublimest chapter in the New Testament—the seventeenth of John—gives to them the sanctity of the Saviour's prayer.

In his vision of "the crowning race" Alfred

Tennyson closes "In Memoriam" with a strain of the same music :

Of those that eye to eye shall look
On knowledge ; under whose command
Is earth and earth's, and in their hand
Is nature like an open book.

This stanza contains Tennyson's answer to the question, What is the goal of the Creation? In it he gives his idea of what the crowning race will be. What is that idea?

Eye to eye they shall "look on knowledge"—that is, then men will not have to go through processes of study to learn, as we do, but will be so alert and pure in thought that they will see into things, and know them as soon as they see them.

"Under whose command is earth and earth's"—that is, there is coming a day when men will actually be master of the forces of nature; will be able to speak to the winds, the waters, the unseen forces, and be obeyed.

"In their hand is nature like an open book"—that is, they shall read the strata of the rocks and the stars of the heavens as now we read poems, and the reading of the one will be no more difficult than that of the other.

"No longer half-akin to brute." Human passion, sensuality, desire for low and base things will be left behind as a butterfly leaves the chrysalis behind, and the man will be free—a pure spirit.

God will be the law, the element, and the end toward which things will for ever move. What a state that suggests! Man so near to God that he will be impelled by His wish—no other law. God will be “the element”—what earth, sky, atmosphere, are now; and into the fulness of this, now inconceivable reality, man will for ever keep advancing, because to God there is no limit and no bound.

Let us now turn to our Bible.

The Bible represents the Creation as in an imperfect condition—in a process toward something better. “The whole Creation groaneth and travaileth in pain”—not only those who have not seen Christ, but, Paul goes on to say, “Even we ourselves groan within ourselves waiting . . . for the redemption of the body.” The present condition is imperfect; the end is not yet realised.

Begin with individuals. Within each man two forces, one evil and one good, contend for mastery. No man is at peace with himself, and no one fully adjusted to his environment. The more we think and the farther we see, the more intense the battle becomes. The finest spirits have been made fine by tribulation. The fight is with tendencies to sensuality, envy, jealousy, and almost all that characterises animals. It is a contest between the animal and the man. The human body is a cage in which are a wild beast and a pure spirit. Each life to-day is occupied

with determining which shall go down—the animal or the spirit. The contest is not finished, although far more frequently than ever before the spirit is the victor.

In society the same condition exists. Individuals are arrayed against each other. Selfishness is rampant. Every man for himself, has been the principle since the world began. The weak are the slaves of the strong; the poor of the rich; the ignorant of the wise. In old days the great man was the physical prodigy; the fellow who could dare and do most became chief. The form of the fight has changed, but the same old battle is waged. Now it is capital against labour; blue blood against common blood; wealth against poverty; and all regulated by competition, which many times is supremely selfish. But things are not as they were. A better day is dawning. The strife is terrible—but not endless.

The same conditions exist among states. The nations are armed to the teeth; if there is no war it is because every one is afraid to begin. The smaller powers are being pulverised beneath the wheels of the larger ones. The ingenuity of inventors is taxed to devise instruments of butchery. The industries are impoverished to support those who are trained in the art of war. The words of Paul are as true now as when first spoken—“The whole creation groaneth and travaleth in pain together.” There is a

tint of light on the horizon, but the gloom is dense and the struggle terrible.

But the Apostle was no pessimist. He never believed that the devil is stronger than God. If he spoke of the dark facts, it was to point to a time when the shadows will flee away. He said: "The creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." Then he refers to the time when the body, or the animal nature, shall be redeemed. This is exactly Tennyson's thought concerning "the crowning race"—a race no longer "half-akin to brute." What is the goal of the Creation? One element is the elimination of that which is brutal, bestial, in humanity. We are like thrushes condemned to live in cages. Our aspirations soar to the skies, but our better natures are broken against bars of sensuality and passion. This is an old battle. Think of Augustine, with his princely personality, the companion of the dissolute and vile until his best years were wasted. Think of Goethe, of genius almost divine, now singing like a seraph, and now dragging through the homes around him an influence vile as a serpent's slime. Think of Byron, with pinions like an eagle, with an eye which could look into the face of the sun, conquered by his lusts. Think of Poe, whose short life was a continual conflict with animalism. But why enumerate? The

picture is too pitiful ; it is not good to look at it too long lest we shall think that the sensual may as well win as be conquered. What says our Bible to all this ? It points to the redemption of the body ; when the lower nature will be mastered by the spiritual. Some time the brute inheritance will be eliminated. It is not strange that men fight and are vicious. Our ancestors were worse. The farther back you go, the more you find human beings like animals in tastes and habits. They lived in forests, and tore meat with their fingers. Now they live in houses, think high thoughts, fight against their evil inheritance, and look for ultimate victory. That vision of the crowning race is full of inspiration. But if a better day ever dawns, will it be this side of the grave ? History will help us here. Historical scholars are never pessimists. Those who look from century to century always discover progress. Remember what conditions existed when our ancestors roamed the forest of Britain. Remember society as it was when robber barons held the common people in practical serfdom, and when pillage and bloodshed devastated all lands. Read the historical books of the Old Testament, and contrast those times with our own. Go back even one century, mark the changes which have been wrought, and then ask if a veritable millennium is altogether incredible. It is the tendency of heredity to perpetuate good inherit-

ance for a thousand generations ; it is equally the tendency of heredity to perpetuate tendencies to vice, crime, and disease only a few generations. If history is prophetic, if the revelations of science are of value, the race may anticipate a day our eyes will never see, when the brute will never more master the man.

Tennyson speaks of the crowning race "under whose command is earth and earth's." That points to the dominion of man over the physical universe. The same thought is found in the first chapter of Genesis—" And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and *over all the earth.*" That points to a time when humanity will reach the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. One power our Master had in perfection, and that was sovereignty over nature. He healed diseases, cured madness, put His commands on winds and waters. St. Paul in the Epistle to the Ephesians teaches that some time all men will have power over nature as Jesus Christ had. Because He could do what men never had done, it does not follow that He did what they never will do. Scripture teaches that eventually the race will reach the measure of the fulness of Christ ; then those living will be able to do what Christ did, and what we now call miracles will be the common achievement of the common

people. This is the teaching of Scripture. There are already hints of the approach of such a time. By the discovery of anaesthetics, physicians have been given power over many diseases. They need to do hardly more than our Lord did when He made clay of spittle and put it on a man's eyes, before they can operate painlessly, giving sight to those who otherwise would remain blind. They have devised ways by which they can look into the ear, and by almost destroying it restore hearing. The experiments with electricity and with the X rays are full of prophecies. Messages are now carried quick as lightning—*by* the lightning; and not only that, we make the same force propel our cars, light our houses, and are assured that soon it will carry our portraits a thousand miles and more. Every time we ride in an electric car we are propelled by a flash of lightning. The same force that zigzags the summer heavens, and sends the thunder reverberating among the mountains, is harnessed and made to take the place of horses on city railroads. And all these things men do as calmly and authoritatively as our Master commanded the waves to be still. Already there are exhibitions of power over nature which, if they had been done by our Lord, would have seemed as wonderful to onlookers as what they did see. We have solar engines by which papers are printed; the sun is made to paint our pictures,

and even to flash our messages. By the phonograph books can be read into a tube, caught on tiny cylinders, and put away for the future to hear. This is not the same world in which the fathers lived. Think of a steamer flying five hundred miles a day, directed by a compass, impelled by steam, lighted by electricity, and carrying with ease a thousand and a-half of passengers along a pathway of which the people in our Lord's time had never heard ! We pass the light of the stars through a prism, and can tell what kind of fuel is burning in those far-away fires. And each day the marvel increases. Science speaks positively of a time, which no one can intelligently believe to be very far off, in which the race, in its power over nature and physical force, will reach the fulness of Christ. What may then be realised we may not even imagine ; but it will be a great and glorious thing to enter into the liberty of the children of God ; to be no more hampered by matter, space, or force than Jesus Christ was.

Thus have we been led to the thought that our Lord was the typical man. He was our Saviour, He was also our Brother. In Him we see not only God in manifestation, but also man in perfection. Looking on the human side, what are we taught ? That Jesus was the type of the race. In Him was revealed what the race was intended to be, and what it will be when Creation is complete. The Church has thought

so much of the Divine Christ that it has not grasped the full and glorious significance of the human Christ. He is the goal toward which humanity is tending. He is the crowning race. He was the Divine plan for each individual. What He was humanity is to be. In Him what is seen? A Being with the animal in subservience to the spiritual; a Being who had all knowledge, and the wealth of the universe, whose supreme ideal was the service of humanity. A harlot went to draw water; the Son of Man sat by her side and told her of the living water. A poor woman crept up behind to touch His coat, and His sympathy healed her. He was in the wilderness where there were many people without food, and He fed them, although He would not work a miracle to feed Himself. He was lied about, persecuted, followed from town to town, but He never spoke an unkind or an ungenerous word. He was the friend of publicans and sinners—their friend to uplift, not the companion of their sins. He never thought or planned for self. When He found that men were thinking too much of Him He told them that it was time for Him to go away. He never had an enemy, and never resented an insult. He never turned from people because they were poor or disagreeable. He laid Himself down, and said in effect, "Walk over Me toward the Father's house and the Father's love." He died to save men who did not understand and

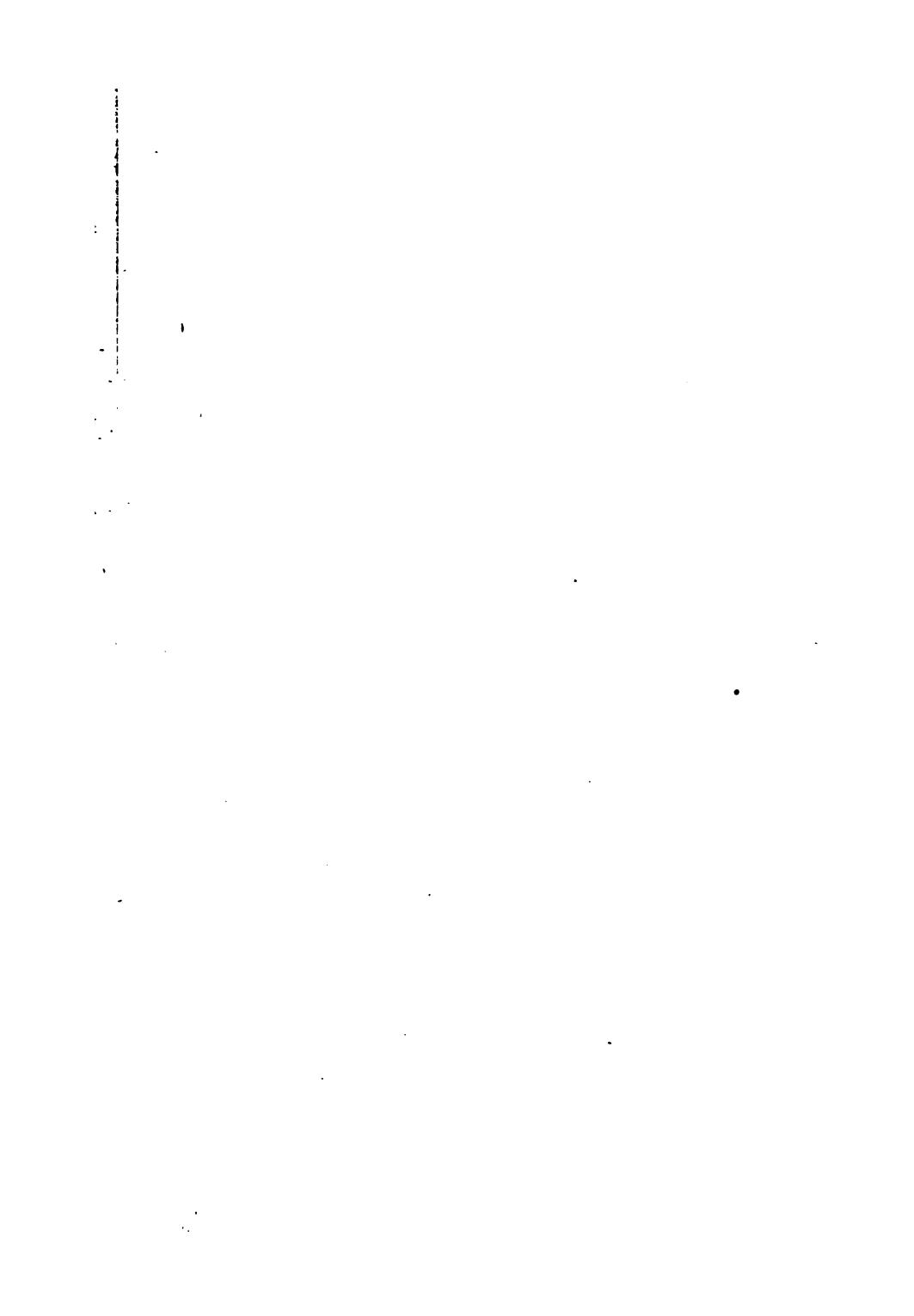
would not appreciate. "He went about doing good." This Man, who could command the universe, and yet who used all his [powers to benefit and uplift humanity, is the goal of the Creation. He is the One toward whom all things tend; in Him is revealed the perfect race. No more inheritance of vice, disease, crime; no more the trail of the serpent staining the generations and leaving marks of sin and shame on the bodily organism. The brute inheritance eliminated; the physical universe with her myriads of forces now unknown waiting to do the bidding of man, and all living not to be ministered unto, but to minister—that is what the Master tells us is coming, not in some far-away heaven, but on this earth, among men who will look up into the same great and wide sky into which we look.

There is yet a loftier altitude. Our Master just before His death prayed for His disciples "that they may all be one, as thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they may also be one in us." That hints at the ethical union of the human and the Divine. Some day, instead of Cæsars, Charlemagnes, Napoleons ravaging the earth like wild beasts; instead of tyrants, simply because they are strong, binding chains on the weak which will make them miserable for ever; instead of invention pushed to the utmost to discover means for destroying life; instead of monopolies, planned to make the rich richer and

the poor poorer ; instead of classes, pride, and a thousand things that separate and make hostile those who should be brethren, all men will be one, even as the Father and the Son are one. O wondrous ideal ! O glorious consummation ! O greatly to be envied people to whom shall be given the joy of living in that crowning day ! But for more than that our Saviour prayed—“That they may also be one in us” : humanity distinct and individual, yet all its members united in perfect love, so that their harmony can be imaged in no way so well as by the relation of Jesus to His Father. And then, in addition, “one with God”—not “absorbed or lost in God,” as the Buddhists would say, but one in spirit with each other, one in spirit with the Infinite and Eternal. The Master’s prayers were prophecies. That crowning race will some time walk earth’s hills and vales in the fellowship of perfect love, in the bond of perfect peace. In the flesh we may not see that golden age, but some day, looking from the heavenly heights, we shall behold no more a groaning, but a glorified Creation, and realise what Tennyson meant when he sang of

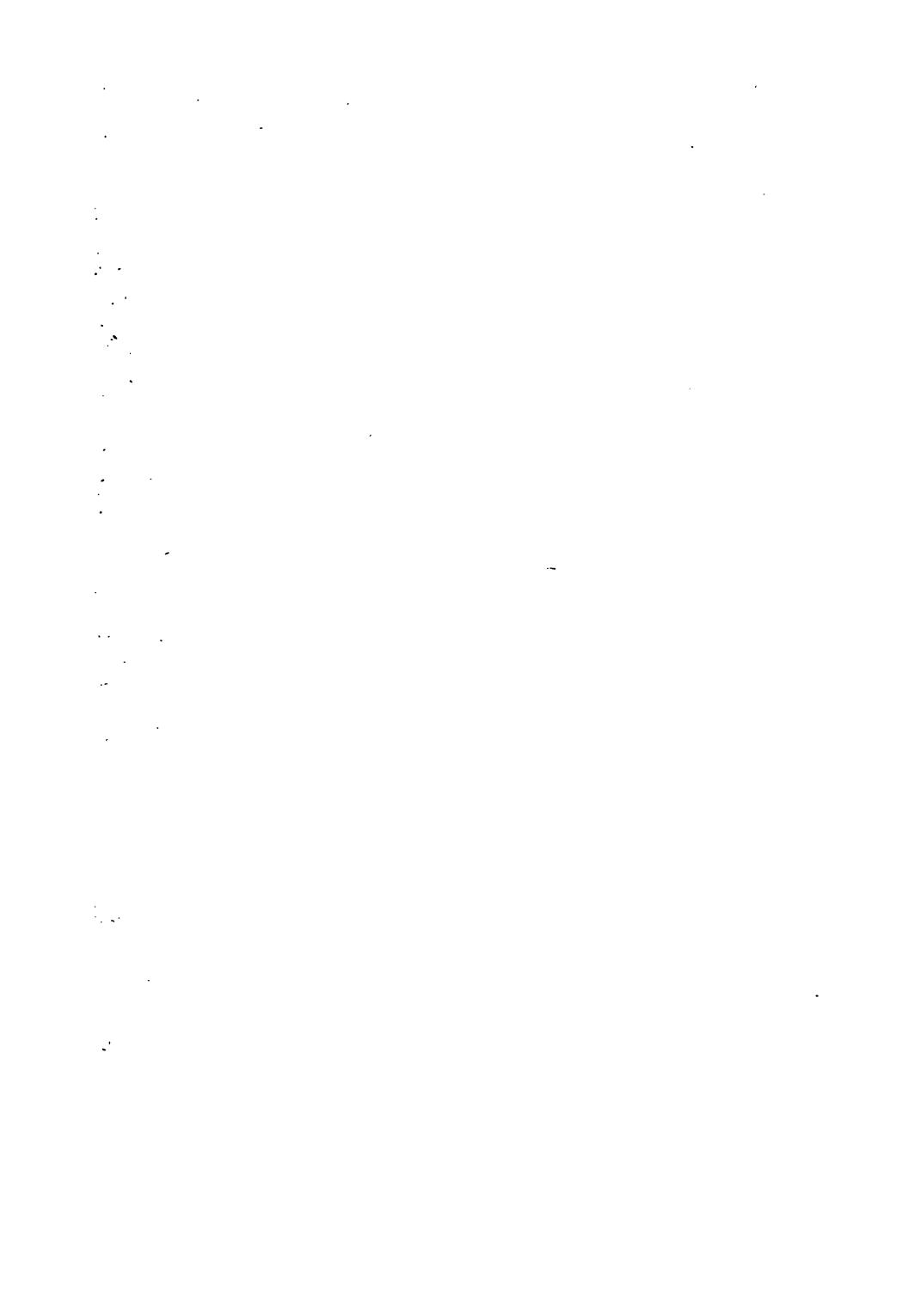
One far-off Divine event
To which the whole Creation moves,

and what the Apostle intended to teach by
“the stature of the fulness of Christ.”



XI.

THE COMING CHURCH.



XI.

THE COMING CHURCH.

“ And having turned I saw seven golden candlesticks ; and in the midst of the candlesticks one like unto the Son of Man.”

REVELATION i. 12, 13.

ST. JOHN was old when he was banished to the Isle of Patmos. That spot is one of the most picturesque on the earth. It was probably in the evening, after work in the mines, that the old man came out into the light and glory of the day. Around were violet waters touched with splendour from the setting sun ; close at hand were barren rocks ; far away were purple mountains ; above was the clear and tender sky. Very likely from meditating he fell asleep and began to dream. In that dream came revelations and a voice. He saw the churches which had been founded in Asia, some true to their faith, others lukewarm and needing to do their first works over again. Those churches were like seven golden lampstands in the midst of thick darkness. As he dreamed a voice spoke, a presence appeared, and he heard these words : “ I am the first and the last, and the Living One ; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have

the keys of death and of Hades." In his dream St. John beheld the living Christ in the midst of the churches, and that vision suggests our theme.

The origin of the Church as an institution is wrapped in obscurity. The New Testament gives few hints concerning it. When it began to be recognised as a society, who composed it, what was to be the exact sphere of its operations, is not stated in the New Testament. It is a growth, an organism rather than a mechanism. An organism has the principle of life in itself and grows from within; a mechanism is a product of something outside itself, and once completed can never change. Life always organises for itself a body. The Church is the body which the Divine life in humanity has organised. The only rule ever given by our Lord for its government is this: "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another, even as I have loved you." The Church is neither like a state, nor like the denominations of modern times; it is rather like a tree. The Master touched His disciples with His life, and that through them touched others, and thus the Church grew. That life is love, and wherever the Church goes love to God and man goes. As for officers, creeds, and methods, those constantly change, as a tree adapts itself to the seasons of the year. How the complicated machinery of modern denomina-

nations came into existence it is hard to tell. There was nothing like it in Apostolic times. The Church then was the company of those who believed in Jesus as the Christ; who came together on stated occasions to study His truth and to help in the advancement of His kingdom. Whether the modern Church is a growth from that as a seed, or a mechanism which has been built around it as we build barriers around trees, is a question about which there is difference of opinion. One thing, however, is beyond doubt. The Church in the nineteenth century can be like that in the first only as a full-grown man is like an infant. The Church will never be what it was when the Master was on earth, and it ought not to be. Growth necessitates change and adjustment to new environment. That of to-day is no more like the Apostolic Church than the nineteenth century is like the first. Thought, institutions, habits of life, knowledge of the universe, have changed, and the Church with them. The Master was a universal man, and yet a Jew; and if He were to come again He would be a universal man, and yet a citizen of some state, and His thought and utterances would show the influence of His surroundings. While it is not to be expected that the Church will be the same in the present or the future as in the past, it is to be expected that it will in all times preserve its essential nature.

Thus are we led to a study of some of the characteristics of the coming Church as prophesied in the teachings of our Lord.

The coming Church will recognise the presence and sovereignty of the Holy Ghost. Jesus spoke not to an organisation, but to individuals when He said, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He shall guide you into all the truth."* The mission of Christ was not completed when He died. Other things were to be done and other truth was to be revealed. The Spirit of God operating through individuals is the means by which the work of Christ is to be continued. Does He speak only through the Church in official ways? Then the voice of the Pope is the voice of God, for he represents the largest organisation. Does the Spirit always speak through the councils of the Church? Then the Council of Constance was right, and John Huss was wrong and deserved his fate. Is the voice of the majority always the voice of God? Then the Pilgrims were schismatics who insulted Providence when they left the Old World for the New; then the Church at Northampton was right when it dismissed Jonathan Edwards to poverty and solitude. No! the Spirit speaks to every soul, and His utterance to one man whose heart is pure and will obedient is more worthy of attention than

* John xvi. 12, 13.

the pronunciamientos of a million who take counsel of their prejudices. The Christ promised the Spirit to individuals. At the Pentecost He came to individuals. When the Apostolic band went out to conquer the earth they retained their individuality. Paul never understood truth as Peter did, and in many things John differed from all. Throughout history the Spirit has had diversity of manifestation, and the kingdom of God has advanced as those who were fitted for large revelations received them and were loyal to them. When the supremacy of the Spirit is recognised men will ask one another, Are you keeping your heart pure and loving, your mind open, your will humble, so that God may guide you into what He would have you believe and do in the time and place in which you are living? It is not important that any should be Calvinists or anti-Calvinists; that they should know whether Moses wrote the Pentateuch; that they should know whether the incomparable story of the Temptation is allegorical or literal; but it is important that all should understand so clearly that they can never ignore it that every day they are in the sight and under the guidance of One who is perfectly holy, and therefore absolutely just; full of love, and therefore One who will lead those who trust Him to all the truth they need to know, all the happiness they need to have, all the work they ought to undertake. The

sovereignty of the Holy Ghost will organise believers into unity and supplant both creeds and machinery. Creeds will never disappear; they are the necessary expression of belief. If a man believes anything he can tell something of it, and his creed will be all of his belief that he can put into language—and he will put it there. But he will not be anxious that his thought to-day should be the same to-morrow; nor will the Christian community desire that its collective interpretations of truth to-day should hold to-morrow; but all, individually and collectively, will strive to keep their lives so pure, so humble, so teachable, so reverent and loving, that when He who walked among the golden candlesticks speaks to them as He spoke to John they may know that they hear the voice of God. The coming Church will not lift to the highest place symbols of doctrine as its standards, but will be known among men as the Church of the Living One, the Society whose leader is the Holy Ghost.

The coming Church will be a magazine of spiritual influences. Some branches of the modern Church measure efficiency by meetings, by societies and guilds, by tracts distributed, by experiences related, by the number at social and public services. These things are important, but only means to an end. Machinery makes noise, whether it does anything or not. A factory is a poor symbol of a church; a house-

hold is better. In the factory everything goes through the same unchanging processes. In the household father, mother, and children hold communion, confer together, pray together, get full of one spirit, and then go, one to his farm, one to his merchandise, one to his music, one to his school and his great thought on great themes ; and the spirit of the home is with all, and each knows that he can be most loyal to it by being loyal to the duty committed to his hands. Some churches make a fetish of one service, and some of another. This or that is declared to be "the thermometer of the church." Others measure spiritual success by rite and ritual, forgetting that

He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small.

Still others rejoice in the crowds that flock for entertainment to a mountebank in the pulpit or an opera company in the choir-loft ; but the Master said, "Preach the kingdom of heaven. . . . Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils." *

The work cannot all be done in one place or way. As the Spirit will lead to diversity of beliefs, so He will lead to diversity of operations. The Sabbath services in the coming Church will be held in order that all may worship, be instructed in Divine truth, and get so full of

* Matthew x. 7, 8.

spiritual electricity that they will thrill all they touch with the life that has thrilled them. The work of a church is not all within its walls: it is in every household where a mother teaches her children; in every counting-room where men insist on doing business according to Christian principles; in every school where children are taught that they should be Christ's disciples; in the silence of every heart in which righteousness pleads against secret sin.

We say, "Come to our churches"; Christ's word was, "Go, preach." "Go!"—that is the message for to-day, and still more for to-morrow. *Go to the people.* Those millions in heathen lands—how shall they be evangelised? "Go, preach." Those millions in America, in England, who, having been reared within sound of Sabbath chimes, still believe that the Church has no message for the poor and vicious—what shall be done for them? "Go, preach. . . . Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils." Those thousands who are drifting into the cheerless desolation of a Godless universe—is there anything for them? Go to them, not with speculations against which their souls rebel, but with the Living One who has said, "I am come that ye might have life." Cathedrals, churches, chapels, whatever they may be called, will not cease to be erected; but for Christians they will be rather places for retirement in order that spiritual strength may be gained to make

every household they enter, every office in which they do business, every hospital in which they nurse, every street in which they walk, places in which those who toil, struggle, suffer and weep, may catch glimpses of the One who will never cease to bear griefs and carry sorrows.

The coming Church will realise the unity of the Spirit. Organic unity may be neither possible nor desirable ; spiritual unity is imperative. Organic unity would necessitate agreement in outward symbols ; spiritual unity can be realised in co-operation for the service of humanity. Why should unity of thought, expression, and worship be sought ? Individuality means diversity, and diversity necessitates beauty and power. Uniformity can be realised only in the solemn desolation of death ; but co-operation is the condition of useful work for the kingdom of God. Why should there be competing sects ? The Christian world contains no sadder picture than that of small towns where money and strength are wasted, not that souls may be saved, and the human condition bettered, but that sects may win proselytes. All denominations are about equally sinners in this matter. A new church is needed, and those already existing hold no conference, make no mutual plans, never ask, Who can do the work best ? but the one which happens to have the money in hand rushes in and pre-empts the field. Missions are needed to the heathen, and

in too many instances there is offered to those who know not how to distinguish, Presbyterian, Congregational, Methodist, and Episcopalian forms of Christianity ; and the poor heathen make the best bargain by going to the highest bidder. Think of rival religious societies when poverty and crime are rising like a flood ! Think of a Zulu trying to understand the immense significance of the difference between immersion and sprinkling ! Think of a Sioux Indian seeking to fathom the mystery of the Historic Episcopate ! Think of street children growing to be criminals, while Christian ministers are actually wrangling over the question as to whether Moses wrote the books that contain no mention of his authorship ! Sects are the product of intellectual differences. They will exist as long as men differ, which will probably be for ever.

But is there no basis for the co-operation among Christians ? There is ; and it will be realised when there is unity of the Spirit. Let the sects keep apart as much as they choose in the making of their theologies, but let them come together in the service of humanity. Is a new church needed ? Why should any other question be asked than, What will suit this particular field best ? and why should not all help as if it were their own ? Is a mission required ? or a home for those who have no homes ? Why should not all consider the ques-

tion and help according to their ability? Nothing less than this can meet the problem of the modern city. Not only is the need too great for money to be wasted, but the ignorance of the people is such that they should not be confused with unessential speculations. A denominational mission in Africa or in Whitechapel is poor generalship. More and more Christians are realising that the first thing to be done for millions is to get them into conditions in which intelligent convictions are possible. The time is coming when instead of rivalry there will be conference and co-operation in reaching the people. If there can be a federation of States, why not of churches? The Time-Spirit, which in this case is the Spirit of God, is at work among the denominations; and the day is not far distant when there will be a federation of the States of the world for the government of the world, and of all denominations for hastening the day in which sectarianism shall disappear and the kingdom of God prevail.

The coming Church will be the realisation of the Christian ideal of brotherhood. Brotherhood has always been the dream of philosophers and the goal of philanthropists. Most revolutions have been attempts to hasten its coming. The French groped for that when they adopted as their motto, "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity." Not change for the sake of change fires the fuses that explode the mines in Russia.

Vaguely but deathlessly the people believe in the brotherhood of man, and thrones, edicts, Papal bulls, armies, cannot eradicate that belief. And the people are right. Jesus Christ was the world's great prophet of brotherhood. He spoke the word of God on this subject: "One is your Master . . . and all ye are brethren." He gave to no subject more constant emphasis. The goal of the Creation He uplifted when He prayed that all might be one as He and His Father were one. His teaching emphasized the value of man, and made contentment in unjust conditions for ever impossible. From the day that cross was uplifted on Calvary until this hour the doctrine of brotherhood has been gaining ground. If Christ died for thieves and harlots, who, then, need fear lest there be no place in the Divine plan for him? Christ is the enemy of caste and oppression in Church, State, and society. When Roman Imperialism invaded the Church He used Luther to break its supremacy; when authority was getting too audacious in the State He inspired the revolutions in America and France. When Great Britain permitted human servitude He raised up Wilberforce; when the same iniquity stained the white splendour of liberty in America He raised up a race of heroes, of whom their time was not worthy, who preached brotherhood until the pen of the President, who was to be a martyr, in an ink of blood wrote,

“God’s children must go free.” The same spirit is working in other ways. Wealth and power forget that labour cannot be a commodity, because labour means children of God working, and as a consequence the best and bravest in professor’s chair, pulpit, and press are uplifting Christ’s golden rule, and declaring that whoever ignores that goes down. All work for man is not done in consecrated sanctuaries. Every spot on which a human being stands holds a temple of God. That teaching is turning the world upside down. Never before was the doctrine of the brotherhood of man so much emphasized. When the Church is clothed in her garments of beauty and glory there will be written over the door of her house on the outside, “To Him who hath loved us and redeemed us with His own blood”; and over the same door on the inside, “All ye are brethren.” When the Church has realised her ideal her power will be multiplied. Who can stand against a million brothers? Ten million brothers, constrained by the love of Christ and moving together, could conquer the world.

Lodges and guilds, unions and secret societies are most of them only rude attempts to realise what the Church will be when men enter fully into Christ’s spirit, write His name above every name, and prove by their lives that they accept His doctrine of the brotherhood of man. That is the ideal toward which we

hasten, while we confess our faith in words
Divinely inspired :

Our Friend, our Brother, and our Lord,
What may Thy service be?
Nor name, nor form, nor ritual word,
But simply following Thee.

We bring no ghastly holocaust,
We pile no graven stone;
He serves Thee best who loveth most
His brothers and Thine own.

The closing years of the nineteenth century are full of prophecies. It is impossible to doubt that some new and wonderful disclosure of spiritual life is not far distant. The veil which separates the unseen and the seen is scarcely more than a film. At any moment it may part, and what is now faith become sight. Events are hurrying with unwonted swiftness. Each quarter of the world is taking its wisdom to all other parts. Society and states are becoming Christian in ideals and methods. The contest has been long and severe, and will be for generations yet to come. Those who follow Christ are hindered by a thousand hands; but to-day the Man of Galilee and Calvary—His garments stained with blood, on His head the many crowns—is more than ever the Leader as well as the Saviour of nations, institutions, individuals; and His Church is gradually but surely coming to its true place, because more than ever—

It is recognising the presence and sovereignty of the Holy Ghost;

Because it is thrilling individuals with His life, and sending them everywhere, that human sin and grief are found with the message of pardon and peace;

Because its members are co-operating in their common work of extending the kingdom;

Because it is lifting high and carrying everywhere the revelation of Fatherhood and the reality of brotherhood.

It needs no prophetic vision to predict that the sovereignty of the Holy Ghost; the responsibility of all who bear the Christian name for the continuance of Christ's work; loving co-operation; and reverent faith in the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, will be realised in the Church of the future, and will be its chief glory.

XII.

THE GROWING REVELATION.

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“And I turned to see the voice which spake with me.”
REVELATION i. 12.

ALL that the Christian revelation means it is not possible for those to understand who cannot put themselves into a world without the hope of immortality. If the doors and windows which open toward the future could be closed ; if there could be taken out of humanity that which has grown into it through many generations, and men could actually be in a world in which death is surely believed to be the end of all; if at the same time there were retained aspirations, longings, love, capacity for growth, and consciousness of ability to improve, would there long remain any of the beauty and glory of life? Only those can fully appreciate what the revelation of redemption really signifies who are able to think of themselves as inhabitants of a world in which not life but death is the goal. Not long ago a letter reached me asking, “What, in your opinion, is the strongest argument for immortality?” Select the strongest I could not, but it was a privilege to reply : “It is impossible for one at least to believe that life,

love, the discipline of experience, passion for growth, and all growth itself are without any purpose except that they may be destroyed." Raphael would not have painted his *Madonna* if he had known that when the last touch had been given to it the divine picture would be burned. It is no more conceivable that a human being can be educated in the schools, disciplined in the home and the state, chastened by sorrow, made compassionate by others' woes, and thrilled by great ideals of things some time to be, if the end is the grave.

To some the words, "the growing revelation," may have a strange sound. Was not the one revelation in Jesus Christ completed when He said, "It is finished"? The reply of all who believe in the Holy Ghost must be, "The process of revelation can never cease while God exists and man is spiritually receptive." Every individual ought to hear some voice which no other ever heard, and every generation should be presumed to possess an aggregate of truth exceeding that of all preceding ages. The text was spoken by St. John when a new and marvellous revelation was granted to him. To him had been given many glimpses of truth in the past: He had heard Jesus speak; had received a commission from Him on Calvary; had had years in which to ponder that message; but on that Lord's day in the midst of the splendour and the solitude there sounded in his ears a

new voice, and our text represents him in the act of turning to see who addressed him : “ And I saw One like unto the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the foot. . . . And His head and His hair were white as white wool, white as snow ; and His eyes were as a flame of fire ; and His feet like unto burnished brass . . . and His voice as the voice of many waters . . . and His countenance was as the sun shineth in His strength. And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as one dead.” Thus a new and larger revelation came to that old man. In forms as real if not as vivid new and larger revelations are given to waiting souls ; and the visions of the wisest are only suggestions of the glory to be revealed. Human life from first to last is a means of Divine revelation. All things are the expression of God, and human growth is growth in the discovery of God.

The first revelation is that which comes through love. When love as a conscious experience is born a great rent is made in the mystery which shuts in human life. Love is a medium of knowledge, a mode of revelation. There are many forms of love, but each one opens a gate into a larger world. The boy consciously loves his father, and thus sees his relations to other men more clearly ; a little later a crude form of patriotism appears, and then he understands that he is not only a member of a family, but

also of the State; later there is given the crowning blessing of finding himself bound by gold chains to one other being, and then the sun seems to have a softer lustre, and every bird to carol a sweeter note. Once more, there is granted a glimpse of the Being in whose hands his father, his family, his State, his loved one, all rest, and he loves his Heavenly Father, and naturally as the flowers come in the spring seeks to do that Father's will. Each thrill of affection is like the opening of a door into a closed room. Few understand how we gain knowledge. Much comes from books, travel, contact of mind with mind, but more from simply loving. You have been unable to grasp a great doctrine like the Atonement until you have had a family of your own and one of them has wandered away. You say, "That child of mine has disgraced his home, his name, his friends, but I cannot give him up. I will follow him to the end of the earth. I will die for him, but he must be found and saved." Wait a moment? Did you not say that you did not believe in the Atonement? "Yes, but what of it?" This: Are you willing to go to the end of the earth, and die to save your child, and can you doubt that God would do as much to save His child? "No." Well, the faith that the Heavenly Father does that is the Christian doctrine of the Atonement. "Now I see." Yes; and you have not learned it in the schools or

from books ; you have learned it by loving. Thus every thrill of love reveals something before unknown about God and the universe.

In like manner *sorrow is a mode of revelation*. To speak of sorrow as a revealer is like saying that darkness is a cause of light. But sorrow is a fountain of knowledge, a mode of Divine revelations. It is so mentioned in the Scriptures. Isaiah's great vision of God followed the shock of the discovery that Uzziah, the idol of his youth, was a leper. The sweetest of the Psalms flowed from the pain of the Babylonian captivity, as wine flows from grapes that are crushed ; and the magnificent visions of the Apocalypse were opened before an old man who was set to digging in a deep mine when his hoary hairs ought to have been regarded as a crown of glory. John Bunyan did not become a seer until he was imprisoned ; Dante sang of Paradise after he had been in his own Inferno ; "In Memoriam" is the cry of one who had first been dumb in the presence of death. But why illustrate ? The illuminating power of sorrow is well known. "Before I was in prison I preached myself, but after I was humbled I preached Jesus Christ," said a man whose best training for the ministry had been in prison. Before any learn much of spiritual things they must have their eyes turned away from themselves. When the skies are bright and prosperity is abundant few think of what comes

after death ; but when our best beloved go away into the darkness we feel that we must know where they have gone. One Easter a man said to a friend who was leaving "the feast of the Resurrection," "I cannot think as you do. To my mind the future is without promise, and all any can do is just the best they can, and hope." A few days later his son, his joy and pride, was stricken down. Then he was asked, "What do you think about the future life now?" He replied, "I don't know anything about it, but I am sure death cannot end life." In other words, his sorrow had taught him that the idea of a splendid, cultured, loving man being put into the ground to stay there for ever is too absurd to believe. Sorrows are hated because they hurt, and men never like anything that hurts ; but in God's good plan every hurt is made the way to larger knowledge and richer blessing. "It is all for the best," said a man as the idol of his life was covered with flowers and laid away. "You did not speak that way once," said a neighbour. "No," he replied, "but I have been disciplined since then." Discipline lets in the light. Love illuminates, and so does sorrow. Love and sorrow are sisters—where one is the other always quickly comes. They are the twin teachers of our mortal life.

The new birth is also a revealer. What is the new birth? It is the experience by which we

are made conscious that we are the children of God. It is like the opening of doors on a June day. Before, the house was dark, the rooms musty and gloomy, the people like shadows; now the whole place is as radiant as a palace. So great is the change in a man who ceases from evil and begins to do well; who takes Jesus Christ for his Master, and says, "God's will shall be my will." There is not at first and suddenly a great influx of spiritual knowledge, for the way of the Spirit is the way of growth. Growth to be healthful must be gradual. By the new birth a man is placed where he sees things in their true relations. God, man, everything here and hereafter, are seen from a different point of view. The value of a man is known as soon as he is measured by Divine standards. It is evident that causes here are connected with effects there, because with God nothing can be aimless; and it is clear that no man liveth to himself, and that there is a purpose in things and a providence over all. This knowledge is the result of a new experience. Thus St. Paul says, "When I was a child I thought as a child, but when I became a man I put away childish things."

We begin life almost like animals, with the clinging of animals to parents, but soon intelligence takes the place of instinct, and then the growing child is linked to father and mother, lover and friend, not by instinct alone but also

by intelligent choice ; and that love which in the man is a self-conscious act shows him how he is related to others ; how love in him must have its source in a fountain of love above him ; reveals to him something more desirable than wealth, more to be coveted than fame, and more imperishable than power. In short, love becomes a schoolmaster leading toward the highest things, and under that tutelage the child grows toward the stature of a man. But hardly does he begin to love before he begins to suffer. Sorrow teaches him that even love cannot keep its own ; that if love would triumph it must have a longer period than threescore and ten years ; that there must be time sufficient for love to grow and complete its ministry. Sorrow teaches a great lesson concerning the solidarity of the race, and so makes those who suffer tender, and careful lest they increase the burden of the world's pain ; it breaks so many plans and disappoints so many hopes that at last, from looking around, men begin to look up, and looking up catch glimpses of the King in His beauty. Sorrow is like a wind that blows away the mists and lets in the sunshine ; like the good hand that opens the windows and permits the fragrant June air to pour into long-closed parlours. Love and sorrow join hands and together lead to the cross of Jesus Christ, where as nowhere else is taught the lesson that the noblest life is obedience to God and service of

man, and that he who can obey God must partake of His eternity. Thus by love, by sorrow, by the new birth, the revelation grows, and continues to grow, until at last there is reached the one great experience toward which all move and from which most shrink.

The revelation by death. What that will be no one can tell, but it must be greater than anything of which men have dreamed. It hath not yet "entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." Who does not long to know what is beyond death? But no whisper comes from that beyond. Hope and Faith alone can guide in these dark hours; and both agree that while "it doth not yet appear what we shall be, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." Whatever death may be, unless everything else in the human experience is not only mystery but mockery, it will be the entrance into something vaster and better than has been known before, for every previous step would not be advance if this were to be a long one backward. The new light comes as the mind is prepared for its reception. To the soul opened by love and made sensitive by sorrow God conveys messages that even He could not teach to others. "The pure in heart shall see God." And now we are before the curtain which separates the seen from the unseen, the mortal from the immortal. What is dying? No one

can tell, but it, too, must be revelation. All that lies beyond must continue to reveal the universe, our home, God our Father, the bond that binds us to our fellow-immortals, our eternal brethren, and the goal which men may for ever approach but never attain. Beyond lies what? Resurrection and life; life in our Father's house; life in a form which will make each individual recognisable. And then what more is taught? Not much—and yet how much! What? This:

“No sorrow, no pain, no sin, no death.” How easily those words are uttered; but what they mean only death can make clear. Light flashes through that curtain, but the full splendour is not for eyes in the flesh.

That life is symbolised by music. Music is the language of emotions too profound for words. Heaven will be harmony; heaven will be infinite bliss; heaven will be something which only music can suggest.

“The Lamb is the light.” The lamb is the symbol of sacrifice reaching to death—of dying love; and that symbolism suggests a state when men shall see in love as now they see in light. Is that indefinite? Yes; hints are always indefinite, but, like the first rays of dawn, they are prophetic. Toward that revelation in the light of sacrificial love all men are moving.

“We shall be like Him.” And the wonder and the mystery grow together. “Like Him”—

but what that means "we know not now, but we shall know hereafter." And then common men, with their littleness, narrowness, selfishness, passion, lust, greed, will be transformed and made like *Him*. Do not think of that miserable outcast as he appears to-day; think of him as he will be when he is *like Him*. Do not measure yourself by your failures, your grey hairs, the little you can do, by your limitations, but by what you will be when you are *like Him*. But what that is you will not know until you see *Him* as *He* is in the glory everlasting.

"God shall be all and in all." God is love and God is light; and what will be when He is all and in all? To answer that all must wait for the grander revelation which will attend the next great step all will have to take—the revelation by death.

What hints are these? A life which shall be music; a life which shall be love; the life of those who are like *Him*, in the time in which God is all and in all? Toward that we are hastening. From what has been we know that something still grander lies before us. To the glory of these ideals let us rise. Let us refuse to believe that those who were made for God shall find no God; and that those who have a passion for light and knowledge are condemned to everlasting night. Those who were made to know God and to grow for ever toward immortal youth cannot become in a

few short years jests for clowns and food for worms.

We bow our heads
At going out, we think, and enter straight
Another golden chamber of the King's
Larger than this we leave, and lovelier.

The revelation by love discloses much ; that by sorrow more ; that by the new birth still more ; that by death must be infinitely ampler and more splendid, and the revelations must continue as God's children are fitted to receive them *for ever and for ever.*

This is all we know and all we need to know.

XIII.

**THE GROWING REVELATION
OF CHRIST.**



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THE GROWING REVELATION OF CHRIST.

“And Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.”—LUKE ii. 52.

JESUS did not suddenly come to His greatness. So far as we know He was not at first conscious of the divine. He moved along the paths of childhood, youth, and earlier manhood ; He was disciplined by circumstances, made strong by limitations, and came like other men to the consciousness of His powers. He grew in wisdom and stature. The linking of wisdom with stature binds Him more closely to our common humanity.

What men do reveals what they are. Character and power find expression in action. What a man is is never understood until he has ceased to breathe, and not always even then, because plans sometimes require more than one lifetime to work themselves to full manifestation. This was true in the case of Jesus. He undertook a task which required ages for its completion. The nineteenth century understands Him better than the first, for the nineteenth century has clearer appreciation of His real purpose. He has relation to all time and all

men, therefore all time and all nations will contribute their part to a perfect knowledge of His Person and mission. In the nature of things His must be a growing revelation, since centuries are required for its full expression. The end is always the test both of the nature and the value of the revelation.

The Christ is revealed in the world, and thus becomes more and more a part of the world. He is the revelation of God, and consequently, as He is better known, there is a larger and truer appreciation of God. The revelation of the one is synonymous with that of the other.

There is a growing revelation of Christ in theology. Theology has a perennial fascination for all thinkers. Every mother is a theologian, and every thoughtful man has his system of theology. There has been revolt from certain theological theories, and this has been confused with an attempt to get away from theology altogether. This cannot be, and is neither desired nor desirable. Theology is the world's thought about God, and all think of God, even those who are least supposed to do so. There is in New England a young girl who is deprived of all senses save that of touch. Through that avenue alone she has become finely educated. She was the friend of the late Bishop Brooks. When the attempt was first made to teach her concerning religion, she is reported to have said in her own way, "Why, I have always known

these things." In other words, she who could neither see, hear, nor speak had her own thoughts about God and His relation to her. Theological subjects are the most popular for magazines and reviews. If a novelist wishes instant attention he attempts theology in fiction. Writers as far apart as Matthew Arnold and Professor Huxley yield to this spell. Those pulpits have the largest hearing which treat in a human way the truths of revelation. They are staple food for human thought. It can never get away from God.

Christ's idea of God as expressed in the Gospels may be condensed into three words: Fatherhood, Service, Sacrifice. He seldom spoke of God except as Father—His Father and the Father of all men. Jesus declared that those who had seen Him had seen God, and His life was filled with service and sacrifice. He went about doing good. He always sought the welfare of the poor, the weak, and the sinning; but His service grew into sacrifice, and His final act was the giving of Himself in death that men might live. The theology of Jesus is short and positive. It is in substance this: God is Father; His essential nature is to serve. Even the cross with all its agony is but a faint hint of what God is doing for men in time and eternity. Man's theology is becoming more like Christ's. Those who study the universe, who observe the sweep of its laws, tremble before its forces, are

awed by its storms ; who see how remorselessly those who transgress are crushed, must believe in the majesty and justice of the Deity. The early Christians emphasized so much of God as had been revealed to them in their experience. That is a true word of Herrmann's in which he says, "The Gospel can help us only if we understand it,"* and we add, in spiritual things we understand only what we experience. At first God was regarded as the awful and majestic King. But Jesus added to that belief the teaching that the Sovereign is the Father ; and to-day the doctrine of the Divine Fatherhood is central and governing in most theological teaching. The old creeds remain, monuments of earnest and honest thought, but the people have passed into a fairer realm. They have not forgotten the Divine holiness and justice, but they have learned that behind all forces and events is the beating of a heart whose love is only hinted at by the tragedy of the cross. The Puritans in the seventeenth century, and the Fathers in earlier times, thought for themselves, according to their light ; in the clearer light of to-day we find most of their teachings true as far as they go, but they had only begun to appreciate the glory of Christ. The vital truths of the theology of Jesus as made known to us are these : Omnipotence is swayed by Fatherhood ; power is intended for service ; at the heart of the

* *Communion of the Christian with God*, p. 6.

universe is One who gives Himself in everlasting sacrifice for those whom He has created. This teaching brings hope and joy, shows that history is not aimless but moves steadily toward a purpose of love; links every child with the throne of God; binds to that throne with a golden chain the outcast and the criminal; insists that humanity is not a procession toward death, but that God Himself spoke in the words of Jesus: "I am come that ye might have life." The true theology is the theology of Christ. That it is occupying a larger place in human thought is indicated by the names of a few great modern books: "The Place of Christ in Modern Theology;" "The Christ for To-day;" "The Teachings of Jesus;" "The Incarnation," and so on. The thinking of our time is becoming tender and gracious, attractive and winning. The majesty of God is even more evident than formerly, since it is seen to rest on a scientific basis, while more and more He is felt to be within reach of the thought and love of the humblest human heart.

There is a growing revelation of Christ in politics. He is getting a place in the midst of the politicians, and is beginning to lead even them. He is humanising the theories of the State. The nation is no longer regarded as a mass of unrelated individuals bound together by laws, but is seen to have organic life and by many even to be ordained to a service as divine

as that of the Christ. That is the splendid ideal now rising into the political horizon. Some teachers are even Christlike enough to declare that the political priest—the politician—ought to be as good and spiritual as the religious priest. This doctrine is not yet popular, but it is championed by great and enthusiastic thinkers who are real prophets. “The Nonconformist Conscience” in Great Britain has dethroned more than one leader because he was corrupt, and kept in the background many who would have become prominent if they had been pure. The revival of municipal righteousness in the United States has traversed the Continent because behind it is the conviction that the city should be as holy as the Church. The State ordained to service? Laws to be enacted in the Spirit of Christ? A dream! Yes, but a dream which already has vital political force. This teaching insists that the nation is the guardian of the moral as well as the physical life of the individual; and that laws which allow the degradation of man are sins against God. The revelation of Christ in politics is changing the treatment of the criminal classes. Very slowly, but actually, criminals are ceasing to be objects of vengeance and beginning to be regarded as unfortunate brothers who need the hand of a Good Samaritan. The number of political teachers who understand that national selfishness is as wicked as individual selfishness, and that that nation only can

truly live which is willing to lose its life in behalf of righteousness and truth, is increasing, and the number of political prophets who see that the nation is called to co-operate with Christ in His work of salvation is not small. But what do you mean by such teachings? We do not understand them. We mean that the nation, when it realises its divine ideal, will make laws and administer them in the Spirit of Jesus Christ; that it will not ask how may its borders be extended and its citizens enriched, but how the Kingdom of God may be advanced. That the State exists simply to protect itself is a low and unworthy ideal; that its chief mission is to enrich its citizens is barbarism. Such teachings do not attract the intelligence and humanity of the young and enthusiastic students who are being trained in the universities, and who will be the statesmen of the future; but the thought that the Christ-message may be realised in the nation as in the individual is worthy of immortal enthusiasm. It has inspired the Luthers and Wickliffes, the Brights and the Gladstones, the Howards and the Gordons, and a host who have dared to be martyrs in the service of God and man. That which is so well begun is sure to go forward. Jesus said, "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." Slowly but surely He for whom there was no room in the inn is finding large recognition in the politics of the world.

There is a growing revelation of Christ in political economy. He getting a large place in business when trusts and monopolies are being multiplied ? When great cities are filled with armies of men living from hand to mouth, without work, without hope, without aspirations ? Christ' getting a large place when the wage-earning class is terribly oppressed ? Yes, His growth into business theories and systems is as remarkable as into any other department of human affairs. This will appear when a few facts are recalled. Every business which degrades a man is now opposed by thousands who will fight it until it is overturned ; statesmen are discovering that they cannot long ignore social abuses ; while the pulpit of the world is ringing with frequent appeals in behalf of justice and brotherhood. Those who insist that the spirit of Christ should control the mart and the exchange, and that the Sermon on the Mount is the most exhaustive treatise on political economy ever penned are called theorists, but such men have never been troubled by hard names. They face the future with confidence, for they remember Emerson's words, "The test of a leader is his ability to bring men around to his way of thinking twenty years later."

Listen ! In all the civilised world the hours of labour are being shortened. It is now recognised that a man has a right not only to a livelihood, but to some little time in which to

improve, to grow, and to enjoy himself. Large firms are giving attention to the question of suitable dwellings for their employees. Children are no longer allowed to work in factories when they ought to be in school. Factories are inspected, and the rights of women are beginning to be guarded. The sweat-shop is felt to be a blot on civilisation. The influence of Jesus is seen in the improved tenement houses; in dining-rooms where operatives secure food at cost price; in lectures and entertainments which make more beautiful the lives of those who know not how to improve themselves; in the insistence that equal justice in the making and execution of laws shall be meted to all. A touch of light has come even into the wintry realm of political economy, and added a little of warmth and beauty to bank and factory. There are great abuses, but they are met by organised and persistent opposition. In the pulpit, in the press, on the platform, and in the club the doctrine is preached that nothing is right in business which is wrong in religion, and that every man ought to regard his competitor as his brother, and love him and his interests as his own.

There is a growing revelation of Christ through His Church. The Church has not always correctly represented the Christ. It conquered the Roman Empire, but the Roman Empire invaded it. For centuries it was a ruling Church,

gradually it is becoming a serving Church. For centuries authority was exalted; gradually the responsibility of the individual is coming to the front. For centuries the Church was an institution competing with the State; now it realises its true life only in the spirit. In the old days the Church was considered an end in itself; now it is coming to be seen that it is only one means for advancing the kingdom of God. In the old days it asked reverence; now it is asking only for opportunities to serve and save men. When it realises its ideal it will be the complete revelation of the Christ.

How is the Church becoming more Christlike? In its desire for unity. Even the common people are insisting that the time has come to exalt the things in which Christians agree, for co-operation in their common work. Sectarians are regarded now with amusement and now with pity. They have had their day, and will cease to be. Denominations mean little to most Christians. The people go where they can get most good and do most good. They are Methodists in one place, Episcopalian in another, Presbyterians in another; and detect little difference in their spiritual food.

There is also a larger revelation of Christ in the unselfish service of humanity—the sublime “crusade of charity,” which is the glory of our century. The Church which lives for itself is a laughing-stock; the society of the Good

Samaritans is taking its place. The Church is realising its privilege of ministry to the whole life of man, and it has to do with bodies as well as souls. It feeds the hungry before preaching to them, and is learning that it must be as loving as Christ before it can help any to love Christ. From being a ruling body it is becoming a serving body ; from seeking its own interests it is finding its true mission and power in the amelioration of the human condition, and in the proclamation of "the blessed Evangel." That ideal is far from realisation, but it shines like a star in the horizon. What Christ was His Church ought to be. He went about doing good. He spent His life in seeking to improve and save men. He felt the burden of the woes and sins of the race. He esteemed it a joy even to die if thus men might live as becomes children of God and heirs of immortality. Slowly that ideal is breaking through the clouds. No other form of Church will long be tolerated. Even the unbelieving acknowledge the power and beauty of the Christian life. Where that appears it wins. The true Church, the Church of the Good Samaritan, the Church of the Holy Cross, the Church of the Holy Ghost, is the revelation of Jesus Christ in the life of individuals and of the community. That is growing, and sometime the body which bears His name will be what He was on the earth.

It follows from what has been said that there

is a growing revelation of Christ in the world and through the world. Not even now do we understand clearly the glory and loveliness of our Lord, for His plans are not yet revealed in life; but enough of them is visible to enable us to see that He not only offers a new ideal for man and society, but that it is a part of His purpose actually to recreate the whole social world. Those who have not known Him are able to see something of what He will sometime appear, in institutions, in the books they read, in the changing and improving political and social conditions, in the more unselfish business methods, in the fact that the Church is becoming a serving and sacrificial society, and in the growing and conquering consciousness of brotherhood. This is not the same world that it was eighteen centuries ago. The civilisation of the time of Christ would be intolerable in the nineteenth century. Cruelties like those in Armenia are exceptions now; they were common then. In every land thousands without thought of gain are helping to bring in the better order. Missionaries are going around the world; hoary barbarisms are falling, and effete superstitions giving place to a reasonable religion. It is now evident that vicarious sacrifice is the eternal and universal law for God and man. The desert begins to blossom as the rose. The people insist that war shall cease. The interests of one land are becoming the interests

of every land. The Divine Fatherhood as the reverse side of Divine Sovereignty, and human brotherhood as essential to ethical religion, are preached in the pulpits and published among the people. Men are seeing God in nature and history as well as in the Church and the Bible, and understanding that every act should be brought to the test of His will. Slowly there is rising before the vision of those who have faith a world in which laws, literature, institutions, states, and individuals continue the service of Christ; a world whose Deity is a sacrificing God, pleased only with the worship of pure hearts and the adoration of loving deeds. The struggle upward is painful and slow; animal conditions are not easily sloughed off; but the beast is yielding to the man, the animal becoming the slave of the spirit. The development of humanity is the revelation of Christ. His teachings are already the inspiration of laws, the enthusiasm of statesmen, and the passion of Christians. Theology often still misrepresents Him, for the wisest men are human; politics is still often an arena in which men fight one another; business has not entirely passed the brute stage; and the Church itself is still hampered by worldly ideals. But into teaching concerning God has come something that touches the heart of man; the duty of the nation to help advance the kingdom is widely recognised; the privilege of service in business

is eagerly embraced by enough to show that it is universally possible ; while the Church has power even with an unbelieving generation because through it shines at least a little of the spirit of the loving Christ.

As Jesus came to wisdom and stature along the slow and hard paths of growth, so He is coming to His true place in thought and life along the harder ways of human history. At first neither His mother, His brethren, nor His disciples understood Him ; but later most became vital with His spirit. For centuries theologians confused His teachings with Roman philosophy, and priests made a tyranny of His Church ; but in each generation He is better understood. His revelation in history is like the progress of the light from a single grey streak to high noon. Such is the Divine plan. The world is ordained to be the abode of Christ, and sometime He will fill and glorify it as an electric arc glorifies a lantern. Of that there can be no doubt, because it is right it should be so, and right must ever win. There need be no anxiety about the issue of the conflict between right and wrong. As the sun touches mountains, meadows, waters, and pours its splendour into valleys and all dark places, so the love of Christ will humanise systems of thought, transform institutions, drive out selfishness, make the Church a continual incarnation, and show history to be the procession of the Holy Ghost.

This is the eternal decree. But there is a question all should ask, it is this : "What part am I having in this process ? As the years go by does the world see more of the Christ in me ?" What more terrible fate can overtake any man than at the last to look upon the world, its conflicts ended, its tumult hushed, its sorrows gone, its evil conquered, its joy complete, and be obliged to confess to himself : "Not one tear have I wiped away ; not one soul has been saved through any effort of mine ; not one note in all this music has been added by me."

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XIV.

CHRIST AND THE CREEDS.

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In the beginning Christianity was one man. Historically it dates from Jesus of Nazareth. The Christian Church believes that in a unique way the Divine life was in that Man. The Church is a growth and not a mechanism. At the beginning it had no constitution, no by-laws, no definite plan of operation, and gave no indication of future greatness. As in the natural world a germ develops through varying cycles of existence, so the spiritual life in Jesus has grown into humanity until there is to-day the Church visible and invisible, and until the kingdom of God seems to be no more a dream, but a vivid and ever-extending reality. In a cathedral the style may be pure Gothic, Perpendicular, or Romanesque, and we argue that one part was erected in one century, and another in a later century. But it is impossible to account for the variations in the Church in any such way. Its spirituality among the Hebrews, its intellectual and ethical forms among the Greeks, and its more practical manifestations among occidental peoples are to be explained by the adjustment of life to environment. In our

study of Christ and the Creeds we begin with the inquiry, Who was Christ?

The historian sees a Galilean peasant who died a violent death in the early years of his manhood. He was a working carpenter. Suddenly He emerged from obscurity, and began to attract others to Himself by personal power and spiritual teaching concerning profoundest themes, unexampled for its positiveness, its spirituality, and its application to the needs of humanity. Poor, and unappreciated by most, He moved among the people with a strange magnetism for the sick and outcast, speaking words of superlative wisdom, talking of the Infinite as of a personal friend, and insisting that brotherhood was a reality. The Romans in Jerusalem hardly noticed His presence, and ascribed the commotion which He excited to Jewish bigotry. Thus Jesus lived and died. He had been out of sight but a little while when those who before were not able to understand or appreciate Him, by a strange influence seemed to realise that He was the fulfilment of the prophecies of their nation. This thought possessed and inspired them, and they told it to their countrymen. Soon the conviction, which at first had been confined to Jews, reached other minds, and those who dwelt on the banks of the Orontes, in Cyprus, and on the highlands of Asia, found in the teachings of this Man a message from the unseen and eternal.

Wonderful changes in individual character were wrought; those who had been provincial became broad, loving, and filled with a passion to carry their knowledge to the world. And so, across to Greece, into the midst of the decaying glories of Athens and the sensuous splendour of Corinth, moved men in whom Jesus had aroused a consciousness of kinship with the Divine, and a faith that all men are brothers. Their numbers increased, and that which had been spoken in Syria, Asia, and Greece reached Rome, and by a process swift and mysterious the faith that that Carpenter had come to the earth with a revelation from the spiritual world won credence, not only among ignorant and outcast, but also among cultured and powerful. In three centuries the Empire acknowledged nominal allegiance to Jesus. From that day His sway has continued to expand. Those spiritually dead have been raised by faith in Him, and filled with a passion to speak of Him to others, going from land to land, penetrating equatorial forests, and singing songs to the praise of the Master among the ice-floes of the North and in the jungles of the South.

Two or three facts should be noticed in connection with this unique movement. When the story of Jesus has been told with the most simplicity, and has had its natural results, it has always worked a change in the direction of righteousness. This young Galilean drove out

narrowness, bigotry, dishonesty, impurity, traditionalism, and brought in reverence for God, love for man, purity of heart, and holiness of life. Thus many who reject the churches acknowledge the mastery of Jesus. Christ and righteousness are always together, and wherever He has triumphed, more spiritual individual life, sweeter home life, and purer public life have always been found.

Another line of influences are associated with this Carpenter of Galilee. At first His story won its way into human hearts, made them loving, trustful, and reverent; but, as it came in contact with philosophy and institutions, as men attempted to account for His existence and His teachings, wrangling began, feuds grew up, wild and terrible wars, and persecutions, fierce and vindictive, seemed to follow in His train. One class of facts is as evident as the other, and yet the second is never to be confused with the first. The diabolism of Constantine, the butcheries of Torquemada, the bigotry of the Puritans of the Commonwealth, were not the natural fruits of the Christ-life; they were rather the dying paroxysms of old institutions or half-understood truths. Jesus, apparently, was only a common man, living a peasant's life, speaking enigmatic words, a fanatic or a lunatic, who died a criminal's death, but from Him have gone influences which have changed history and are growing more vital after two thousand years.

The human mind sees facts, and seeks for their explanation. The way in which men explain what they see or know is called theory. The creeds of Christendom are crystallised theories concerning Christ and the Christian revelation. It was inevitable that a man who being dead retained such power, should be the subject of speculation. This tendency was manifest while Jesus was alive, for Peter told Him that men were asking who He was. The Master, without answering, asked Peter for his opinion, eliciting the reply, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." After His death there was recognition of the historicity of Jesus and of the vitality of His words. Men believed in *Him*. If they were Jews they would add, with emphasis which only a Jew could give, "I believe in Jesus *the Christ*, the Son of the living God." If they were Gentiles, without the Messianic expectation, their creed was simply belief in Jesus and in His message concerning God and man. Theories in regard to the new Teacher, and attempts to adjust His words to current philosophy, quickly multiplied.

The next step was to make acceptance of the theories as important as recognition of the life. The Teacher had associated His own name with the Father and Holy Spirit; and disciples had been received into His fellowship by saying they believed in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. It was then asked, How can these

names be classed together without an assertion of equality and unity? and then, How can the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit be different beings and yet one? Thus almost in a day speculations pushed themselves into the little community and usurped the chief place. Emphasis had been upon a Person and the sequent moral life inspired by Him; but the Person was soon obscured by clouds of words. Creeds are formulated theories concerning Divine facts. They are inevitable and desirable. In the early time Jesus was the supreme reality, and men confessed faith in Him; but with the attempt to adjust His person and teachings to other facts, simple confession was exchanged for complicated formulæ of belief. The earliest creeds were confessions—acknowledgments of loyalty to Christ, and belief in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Then slight additions of theory were made, as in the Apostles' Creed, which is the oldest, the most nearly ecumenical and generally acceptable epitome of Christian faith. It is purely confessional, the voice of devout spirits, an outburst of the common Christian experience. Gladness, hope, victory, thrill through it until the great and growing music culminates in the life everlasting. When speculation was fully started the Apostles' Creed was enlarged, not only with the acknowledgment of Jesus as the fountain of spiritual life, but with attempts to explain God, to show how three personalities

inhere in the Divine nature, and how the work of salvation is accomplished. Later the process was more complicated, and the Nicene Creed was followed in succession by those of Chalcedon, of Athanasius, and many others. Thus the early confession of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit gave place to speculations on the Trinity and the universe, until at last the Westminster Confession was fashioned, which, with all its richness of expression, grandeur of conception, and terrible horrors may be regarded as the culmination of an effort to adjust and put into credal form the contents of the Christian revelation. The early creeds were confessional; the later, whole bodies of divinity, crystallisations of what has been thought concerning infinity and eternity from the foundation of the world. Only when the confession is crowded out by the standard, when truth is made of less importance than theories concerning it, is there reason for criticism and revolt.

We now face two facts. One man has lived, and one alone, to whom the words of Renan may be appropriately applied. He "remains to humanity an inexhaustible source of moral regenerations." Before Him an increasing majority of the civilised world adoringly bow; in Him they behold the Divine life manifesting itself in and through humanity. Concerning this Man there have been many speculations, and we now ask, What is their

significance, and what should be our attitude toward them?

The first question can be answered by a brief examination of a few of the Christian creeds. For this purpose we have selected the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene, that of Chalcedon, the Westminster Confession, the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England, and the Creed issued by the National Council of Congregational Churches of the United States in 1883. Leaving other inquiries, we come to the documents themselves, and ask, What place has Christ in them?

The Apostles' Creed summarises the early history of Jesus Christ as narrated in the Christian Scriptures. It neither tries to harmonise nor explain any statements of the New Testament, and contains no theories. Its language is almost entirely Scriptural. It possesses elements of endurance in its simplicity and rhythmic quality. It may be spoken or sung, easily adjusts itself to liturgies, and belongs to the whole Church of Christ.

The Nicene Creed, like the Apostles', is grouped around the baptismal confession, but is more complex and philosophical, while it has the same rhythmic form, and fits itself easily to a simple or elaborate ritual. It seems to belong to a later century than the fourth, because it is so rich in its liturgical quality. In it the tendency to speculate is clearly manifest. The facts are narrated, but each is loaded with a

burden of philosophy. "Jesus Christ. . . . begotten of the Father before all worlds (God of God), Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father." The remainder of the article on the person of Christ is a narration of facts, like the Apostles' Creed, and needs no attention. In the Nicene Creed we are introduced to *inferences* from Scripture: Christ was begotten before all worlds; He is very God of very God; He is begotten not made; He is of one substance with the Father. The Apostles' Creed makes no mention of the Deity of Christ; the Nicene puts it in the forefront, and the Nicene theology and phraseology have influenced the thinking of the Church until our time. The value of such articles of faith depends on what use is to be made of them. For purposes of confession they are valueless; for the confession must be elastic enough for the common mind, and comprehensive enough for the learned. To expect a child or ignorant person to fathom the depths of such phrases as "very God of very God," "begotten not made," is absurd. On the other hand, if the object is to indicate the trend of Christian thought, and to tell the world what theories are held by theologians, then the Nicene Creed must be accorded a high rank among human compositions. It presents our Lord first in His Divine nature, and then in His earthly ministry.

The symbol of Chalcedon was adopted at Constantinople A.D. 451. It carries the tendency to speculate still farther, and attempts to explain the mysteries of the Incarnation and the Trinity. This Creed declares that Jesus Christ was an actual and abiding union of God and man in one personal life; it distinguishes between nature and person, and says that the Logos assumed not a human person, but human nature which is common to all, and hence He redeemed not a particular man, but all men as partakers of the same nature. The two natures constitute but one personal life, and yet remain distinct. The suffering on the cross was of the human nature. The whole work of Christ is to be attributed to His person, and not to the one or the other nature exclusively. Again, we say, if a creed should contain such truths, and such only, as are essential to spiritual life and co-operation in Christian work, the symbol of Chalcedon, like that of Nicaea, is absurd, for not one in ten thousand can follow the distinction between nature and person, or understand how two natures can cohere in one person, and the person be in the nature, and yet not a part of it. On the other hand, if the symbol is to be understood as an attempt to explain and harmonise certain facts, then the more it is studied the more satisfactory it will be found.

Making now a long leap, we come to the Westminster Confession, which represents the

culmination of the creed-making tendency. The parts which refer to the person of our Lord are essentially Nicene. They may be condensed as follows: The Son, the second Person of the Trinity, is very and eternal God, of one substance, and equal with the Father; of one substance with Mary; in Him are two whole and perfectly distinct natures, yet one person—very God, very man, one Christ the only Mediator.

The Thirty-nine Articles of the Anglican Church are, in their treatment of the person of our Lord, essentially like those already considered. The article on "The Creeds" explicitly says that "the Nicene Creed ought to be thoroughly received and believed."

Congregationalists in the United States have three doctrinal statements of historical interest which in a loose sense may be said to be representative: the Burial Hill, the Oberlin, and the National Council Confessions. In them is seen the rebound from the tendency to burden confessions with speculation. The Burial Hill Confession says: "We confess our faith in God, in Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word, who is exalted to be our Redeemer and King." Concerning His work it says: "We . . . acknowledge that it is only through the work accomplished by the life and expiatory death of Christ that believers in Him are justified before God, and receive remission of sins."

The Oberlin Declaration is non-committal, and yet seems to put its approval on the general body of doctrine usually called evangelical.

The National Council Creed is confessedly non-confessional. Concerning the person of Christ it says: "We believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who is of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made," who is to be worshipped with the Father and Holy Spirit. The love of God finds its highest expression in the redemptive work of the Son. Then follow ideas which are clearly Nicene in their origin, and which in turn are succeeded by the statement that our Lord continues His work of salvation now that He has passed from the earth; that His object in coming was to establish a kingdom of righteousness and peace.

Thus the teaching of some of the œcumical creeds concerning Christ has been sketched, and also that of some of the confessions which represent the Free Churches. In studying these documents it must be remembered that speculation concerning the eternal mysteries is inevitable and desirable. Speculation is the pioneer of progress. There has been no more of it in theology than in other sciences. Moreover, the universe is a unit, so that theories in one sphere of thought influence thinking in all spheres. The creeds named represent not only the thought of the Church, but equally the

thinking of the times in which they were composed. The doctrine of Evolution, with its transformations, is a recent product ; there is no more of it in ancient geology than in ancient theology. If many of the creeds are outgrown it is because there has been progress in everything else as well as in theology. They are no farther behind the nineteenth century than the geology and biology of a century ago. The sciences go hand in hand ; advance in one makes possible advance in all. Only when statements of doctrine are used as barriers to prevent children of the light from entering into their heritage do we rise in indignation and ask, What men wrote those creeds ? Why should they be considered infallible ? With something of impatience we turn to our Bible, and ask what confessions it contains ; and there find that each individual made his own confession ; that no one was exactly like another ; and that each was suffused with the personality of the confessor. Every individual who knows Christ as His Saviour has a unique experience ; and unique experience requires original expression. Nathanael said : " Rabbi, thou art the Son of God ; Thou art the King of Israel." Simon Peter said : " Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." Thomas answered : " My Lord and my God ! " The Eunuch said : " I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." And the baptismal formula is : " Into the name

of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." No two are alike. The Divine life in nature has an infinitely diversified expression; so has the Divine life in humanity.

Having shown what the place of Christ in the creeds is, we now observe that creeds are mechanisms built around the growing and expanding Christ-life. Those who make them may have somewhat of that life, and may have but little. Those who have the most of it are least likely to waste time in attempting its definition and limitation. God in the soul is a universe, and they gaze into its measureless spaces with the same awe as into the depths of the starry heavens. Those who have been conscious of the Divine presence have striven to be plastic in the unseen hands rather than to explore horizons which have opened before their vision like a northern midnight thick with stars. Life is always a wonder. It eludes definition and analysis, and grows according to its own laws. While scholars were beating out the articles of the Confession of Chalcedon, all through the world, in serene unconsciousness, humble spirits were following Jesus in the realisation of fatherhood and brotherhood. While the reformed divines by every device known to logic were packing words with sovereignty, reprobation, and expiation, millions who never heard of a logical process were yielding to the mastery of Jesus, and learning at first hand that

He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. The stars move in their courses whether the astronomy is Ptolemaic or Copernican ; heather and furz embroider Scotch hills in blessed oblivion of all that has been written about the Origin of Species ; and men are born, live, work, think, write, perform heroic acts, make literatures, and die, without the slightest acquaintance with the theories which distinguish one school of medicine from another. Life can never be expressed in terms of mechanism. There is something in the heavens which eludes logic. Poetry and music can come nearer than mathematics to describing a tree with its unseen chemistries, its silent but ever active forces, as it rises from a tiny seed, meets the sunlight, and measures strength with storms. Creeds have been inevitable because Christianity rests upon facts and truths which are known to be such as the result of intellectual processes. Those who most decry reason trust to its conclusions. Revelations are always made through our mental faculties. The Almighty chooses to stand before the judgment-seat of man. Creeds bear witness to the greatness of man ; they show that whatever carpers say, he dares to go everywhere with the torch of his own thought. Instead of showing intellectual bondage they bear witness that in all ages Christians have thought for themselves, whether they were willing that others should do so or not. As

generation after generation has put its idea of God, Christ, and the spiritual universe, into written form it has simply registered the results of its investigations. But coincident with this process, unseen as the spirit in man, or the breath of the south wind in the springtime, something has transpired which, in a very little while, has emptied those fine phrases of their meaning, and brought in other, and usually more satisfying, ideas which require new expression. Physical life never rests. Slowly but unceasingly it thrills and throbs in gardens and orchards, in meadows and forests, in summer and winter, in day and night; and the Divine life which was in Christ never rests, but is ever busy winning its way into individual hearts, transforming institutions, revolutionising states, gradually bringing in the new day of love. New life is the superlative fact in the movement in humanity which began with Jesus Christ. Old institutions have fallen; ancient theories of ethics have dropped out of sight; hoary superstitions have disappeared, at the very time that speculations concerning Christ were most confused with Christ Himself. As some lofty spirit hears smaller souls trying to account for his greatness, and smiles as he rises to grander tasks, so, undisturbed by puny speculations, the living Christ moves along His shining pathway, continuing revelations, working miracles, and by never-ceasing sacrifice releasing

the groaning creation. Creeds have been made as unlike Him as the Doge's dungeons are unlike the sky above Venice. Those creeds have been uplifted in the place of Him ; and at the same time men have been won to the life of love. Even when He has been represented as cruel and heartless men have had revelations in secret which have filled their dull hearts with hope, their barren lives with service, and lifted their thoughts to take in heights beyond the stars. In other words, the life has been more than the mechanism. Creeds are essential to our fallible thinking ; but Christ has never yet been imprisoned in a creed.

The New Testament always presents the Christ in terms of life, and His teachings thrill with life ; He was incarnate ; He came into a living man. The Life was the light of men. He taught by words ; inspired by influence ; moved on society by what He was. His greatest utterance concerning Himself was, "I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly." He said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life." He represented the process by which others were to become like Him as a birth from above. He left no rules, wrote no book, made no laws, framed no government ; said that what He came to achieve would be like a mustard seed. His lessons were taught in terms of life. God is the "Father ;" prayer is the intercourse of spirits ; "Pentecost" was a new and unexpected

manifestation of spiritual energy. The music of His teaching never touched a higher note than when He said : "Because I live, ye shall live also." The state from which He came to save men was death ; that to which He saves them is life.

While the intellect will always attempt to harmonise and adjust facts and truths, there will always be facts and truths which will defy adjustment and harmony. An eagle and a lily can never be adjusted ; a meadow lark and a hippopotamus can never be harmonised ; all that can be said is that both live—their harmony is in unseen spheres. When Gobelin tapestries are woven only the reverse side is visible, but out of sight is a perfect plan, and each thread has its own place in what some day will be a thing of beauty. So in higher realms facts and truths which to us seem antagonistic slowly but surely are made to take their places in the world's great harmony. Scripture teaches that in Christ all things inhere, and from Him the Kingdom of God is being gradually evolved. Creeds have never told much of what Christ has been to the world ; they have been filled with speculations about Him rather than with Him. He is life manifesting itself in righteousness. What He is requires for its expression not logic, but holy character. Men have tried to tell how the Infinite subsists ; how the Unfathomable works, what will be in the eternities, while He has

been saving individual sinners, creating finer conditions in society, introducing new ethical standards, bringing in hope, and putting in the place of cruel hate and sordid greed the love of God and man. The essential things of Christ have never been written in doctrinal formulæ. The Apostle said, "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen cannot love God whom he hath not seen." The world waits for a creed in which one article shall be, "I believe in the brotherhood of man." In that is more of Christ than in a thousand pages about the eternal generation. The true Christian lives not to be ministered unto, but to minister. In what ecumenical symbol is that written? When will this declaration be placed above speculations about Trinity, plan of salvation, and the mysteries of the future, "We believe in the golden rule; that all men should love one another as Christ loved those for whom He died; that 'he prayeth best who loveth best all things both great and small'?"

There will be a Church of the future. That Church will have a creed, definite and strong, for while men live they must think, and while they think they will have creeds. But gradually enigmatic utterances concerning fathomless mysteries will be replaced by some such words as these: "We believe that the pure in heart shall see God; that 'whosoever loveth is born of God and knoweth God'; that

Jesus Christ reveals in humanity all we need to know of God and the possibilities of man ; that He saves from sin all who follow Him ; that love of the brethren is the test of discipleship. We believe in the constant guidance of the Holy Spirit ; that all things are in God's hands, and never can escape from Him ; we believe in the brotherhood of man ; the communion of saints ; that 'whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap' ; and in the life everlasting." * Along some such lines the creed of the future will be written. It will reach directly for the real things, and will come fresh and throbbing from experience of the salvation that is in Christ. The Divine life in humanity can neither be expressed nor imprisoned in any form of words, and His work, like the elemental forces, goes on untouched and undisturbed by human speculation.

The progress of Christianity, or the growth of Christ into the life of the world, cannot be learned from doctrinal confessions. They seem to have moved in a circle. At first they were simple and heartfelt expressions of personal trust in the Master, and the utterance of faith in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Later, there grew around these central truths a body of doctrine. The simplicity of the Apostles' Creed

* This passage was written two years before Ian MacLaren's so-called "Life Creed" was published, and is not, therefore, to be regarded as an adaptation of that.

gave place to the slight complexity of the Nicene, and that to the greater complexity of the Creed of Chalcedon, and so on, until the childlike confessions of the earlier times entirely disappeared from the Church. The tendency toward elaboration and complexity culminated in the Westminster Assembly. Since then there has been a reverse movement toward simplicity, toward acceptance of the Apostles' Creed as sufficient for confessional purposes. Take two illustrations: the earliest great creed and the latest. Compare the Apostles' Creed with that of the National Congregational Council. Does the comparison give any clear idea of the growth of Christianity? Is not this the conclusion—After two thousand years of strife the Church is slowly getting back to its starting-point? How many think the Council's Creed preferable to the Apostles'? Does the Council's Creed have anything more satisfying concerning the Divine existence than "I believe in God, the Father Almighty"? Does it shed one ray of light more on the person of our Lord? There is the music of anthems and the swell of great organs in the following from the oldest of creeds: "I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy Catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting." The creeds of the world tell nothing of the growth of Christ as a vital power in

human thought and character. They have the same relation to Him as churches, cathedrals, and liturgies. Cathedrals show that men in different times have had varying ideas of what buildings best honoured their Master ; and liturgies show how people have chosen to express their worship. But liturgies and architecture cannot tell how that Man of Galilee has become the Master-thought of all our thinking and the Master-light of all our seeing. The growth of the Christ-life in the world must be sought among the people, where He still goes about doing good, binding up broken hearts, opening blind eyes, casting out devils, and preaching a new day to the poor. Would you try to account for the genius of the author of Lear and Hamlet by the clothes which he once wore ? The creeds of the ages are the coats and cloaks which men have hung on the living Christ, not a few of which in our time have become moth-eaten and musty. They are no more like Him than a libretto is like an oratorio, or an astronomic chart like the heavens full of splendid stars.

But now interrogate society, institutions, and the life of man. Leave the fact that Christ has been preached in all ages and lands ; forget for the time temples and cathedrals, solemn music, vested choirs, priests, and preachers. Simply consider human life as it may be studied in its customs and institutions, and answer, Do they

speak any more distinctly than doctrinal confessions concerning what Christ is and has done? Wherever He has been preached, at once and of necessity the life of love has begun. Its growth has been slow, for its environment has been unfavourable. In your Gibbon and Mommsen read of the world at the time of the Advent. What crimes were enacted in the name of justice and law! What wretches polluted the splendour of the Cæsarean throne! A philosophy of despair had taken the place of religion. Augustus, having failed to revive the old State religion, had resorted to magicians and soothsayers from Egypt and the East; little children were put on the street to die by those who claimed respectability. On one island in the Tiber the aged were left, like worn-out horses. Imagine a world without hospitals, asylums, children's homes, fresh-air funds! Think of tens of thousands gathering to see men kill one another, as we assemble for baseball and football! Remember that that was in the heart of the most splendid, and in many ways the best, nation which the world had ever known; that it was not exceptional, but that what the capital was the provinces were. Remember that slavery existed in well-nigh every land; that woman was degraded; that fathers had the power of life and death over their children; that divorce was almost as common as marriage; that in the most splendid

cities sensuality was exalted to worship. In that dark and awful degradation were many bright spots. Man is not and never has been wholly bad. Serene and beautiful spirits have never been entirely unknown. Marcus Aurelius sat upon the same throne as Nero and Caligula ; Cornelia walked the streets of the same city as Agrippina ; and yet cruelty held the sceptre, love had little honour, and humanity did not seem to be moving toward better things. That young Nazarene lived and died. The words which He spoke were treasured and repeated, and the subtle something which we call life, for it had the power of reproducing itself, began to germinate and extend. Wherever that life went society was changed. Gladiatorial exhibitions were given up in response to an appeal in the name of Christ ; asylums were built because He took little children in His arms ; the poor, often not wisely, were cared for because they were of the humanity into which He had come ; hospitals were built because it was His mission to heal diseases, and almost always in connection with churches. The dialogues of Plato stimulate speculation ; the influence of Jesus bears fruit in holy character. Other masters have had a few disciples, but where the message of Jesus has gone the church, the school, the hospital, the asylum, those great sources of moral regeneration, are found side by side. They

belong together, and are the efflorescence of a common life. He taught the brotherhood of man. To teach it and to realise it are different things, but brotherhood grows from Him as a tree from a seed, and the very rabble that is ready to sack the churches will cheer His name to the echo. No real democracy was ever known before Jesus washed His disciples' feet, and taught the world that he who would be chiefest should be servant of all. Laws were made for kings—now they are made for men. Little children are embraced in the protection of the State; woman is the equal of man; competition is giving place to co-operation; duelling is almost a disgrace, except in France and Germany, and there it is a farce; slavery is nearly gone, for to buy and sell a man is to make merchandise of a son of God; and while the armaments of the world are greater than ever, no nation dares take the responsibility of precipitating conflict. Wonderful as these changes are they are but symptomatic of others more striking. Churches, charities, schools, are as nothing when balanced against hope, joy, love, and the consciousness of a meaning and a chance in life. Figures cannot express the emotions in a human breast when the doors of a prison-house open beneath splendid skies. Mathematics fail when the gate of death swings into life. The saddest fact of the old time was its hopelessness. Cruelty in

conduct is the expression of despair in philosophy. Show men that they are in an infinite dungeon whose only escape is death, and the wail of the Buddhist will everywhere be heard: "And life is woe." Epictetus and Aurelius wrote sublime sentiments; they faced the solemn mysteries with heroic spirits; but they had no power to bind up broken hearts; and while their teachings might nerve a few to endurance, they inspired no enthusiasm, and opened no newer and larger horizons. Need the other side of this picture be sketched? Can the living Christ be found in society and history? Is He not saving men to-day? Who is that preacher thrilling thousands with his message? One who aforetime was a drunkard in the ditch. Who is that missionary leading in the transformation of a State? One who was once a waif taken from an almshouse. Who is that woman, who, laying aside fine clothing and jewels, chooses to go in rags and tatters among vilest human wrecks, teaching them, praying with them, feeding them, in peril for them, willing to die to save them? One who learned her lesson from Him who died for harlots and thieves. Can hallucinations inspire such enthusiasms? Who shall explain the marvel of it? Why does it need to be explained? Do we seek to untwist the sunbeams before basking in their warmth? Shall we try to analyse the south wind before breathing the

fragrance of the springtime, or listening to the singing of the birds? Can motherhood, with its heart of love and arms of steel, be explained? Can love be separated into parts?

The creeds tell us what fallible men have thought about Jesus the Christ. They are worthy of study. They are honest attempts to answer ever-recurring questions. All men have creeds. He who has no creed never thinks. They exist in the history of the Church like milestones on a pathway which has been traversed, like records of ages long gone, which reveal great lessons concerning what has been; they are invaluable as testimonies; but it is criminal to use them so that the thinking of one time is made a standard for all time. Wisdom was not born yesterday, and will not die to-morrow. Nothing infallible can be taught through fallible speech. Progress depends not on loyalty to what has been, but on union with some one who never ceases to grow, or with some one who can be for ever approached but never reached. The Life which is the light of men is eternally progressive; it is never one day what it was the day before. Thoughts of men about it must change with its growth; that which is true of it to-day may be inadequate to-morrow. Death alone never changes. The creeds are the results of the honest efforts of earnest men to express their thought on eternal mysteries. Let them never be denounced. The work of earnest and

good men, even if they are not wise, always has some lesson worth studying. Those symbols have holy memories twined around them. They have grown into the thought of the Church; been chanted in its liturgies, taught to childhood, studied by manhood, and held aloft like banners in front of the advancing Christian host; but they give very little idea of Christ. He must be found—as He always was found when in the flesh—in the midst of the want and woe, the vice and crime, the sickness and misery, the desolation and death of humanity, comforting the sorrowing, blessing the children, healing the sick, saving the sinning, preaching the Gospel to the poor, and telling all men of the Father's house and the Father's love.

The true creed never has been written and never will be. Only Christ Himself could compose that. "Now we see through a glass darkly." Eternity and infinity have not all been revealed. They are an endless study. Even the Son of God could not communicate them to finite intelligence. Mysteries that angels desire to look into men will not quickly exhaust. The true attitude before high themes is one of humility. Dogmatism is hostile to the Spirit of Truth. The pure in heart shall see God. No man knoweth the Son save the Father. His followers were called disciples—that was the best of names. Christians are the eternal disciples of the Great Teacher. Truth

is important, but life is not dependent on truth. Men are like what they believe, but life is not the product of truth. Truth is the fruit of life. Truth and life do not always go hand in hand. Devils may have as much truth as angels. Where the Christ-life goes the truth always follows. Spiritual life is imparted by contact with Christ in the spirit, just as physical life is the product of physical life. Jesus Christ is the source and fountain of spiritual life, therefore the essential thing is to get in touch with Him. As one torch lights another without itself being dimmed, so He lights the minds and thrills the hearts of all who will to do His will. It is not necessary to know truth in order to be right. That would be imperative if Christianity were a mechanism. He who would make a watch must know all about watches; but He who would be a Christian must know Christ. If we manufacture our Christianity then perfect rules are essential, but the life of God in the soul grows according to its own nature, and so the essential thing is not what we know, but whether the hindrances to the growth of that life have been removed. If a man had never seen a carnation pink or an Easter lily, and were to ask what they were like, would he be given a botany? He must see the wealth of their colouring and breathe the richness of their perfume to know what they are like. If one born blind were to inquire about the stars, would he

be offered an astronomy? His eyes must be opened, before the constellations and the upper deep will have any meaning for him. Such a desire to be right as turns from evil, and reaches toward holiness, must precede knowledge of Christ. That desire is met by the Divine love, and from that union, with no greater mystery than always surrounds the beginning of life, the Christ is reproduced. The process has been going on for centuries. Many have vainly imagined that they were spiritual because they accepted the confession; and many have refused the confession and proved by indisputable evidence that they had the life. This shows what the Church really is—the society of those who are possessed by the Divine life. The true Church is a communion of potential Christs—a society of Saviours.

The steps which we have taken through this chapter are as follows:

In the beginning Christianity was only a man.

Its growth has been the growth of the life in that man.

At first acceptance of the life was the sole confession.

As a result of the contact of the truth of the Christian revelation, and the natural tendency to philosophise, creeds have been formulated.

Creeds are the records of attempts to harmonise Divine realities with one another, and to adjust them to human thinking.

Creeds at first were confessions of loyalty to the person of Christ ; later, bodies of speculations concerning Him and His work.

The Scriptures always present Christ in terms of life.

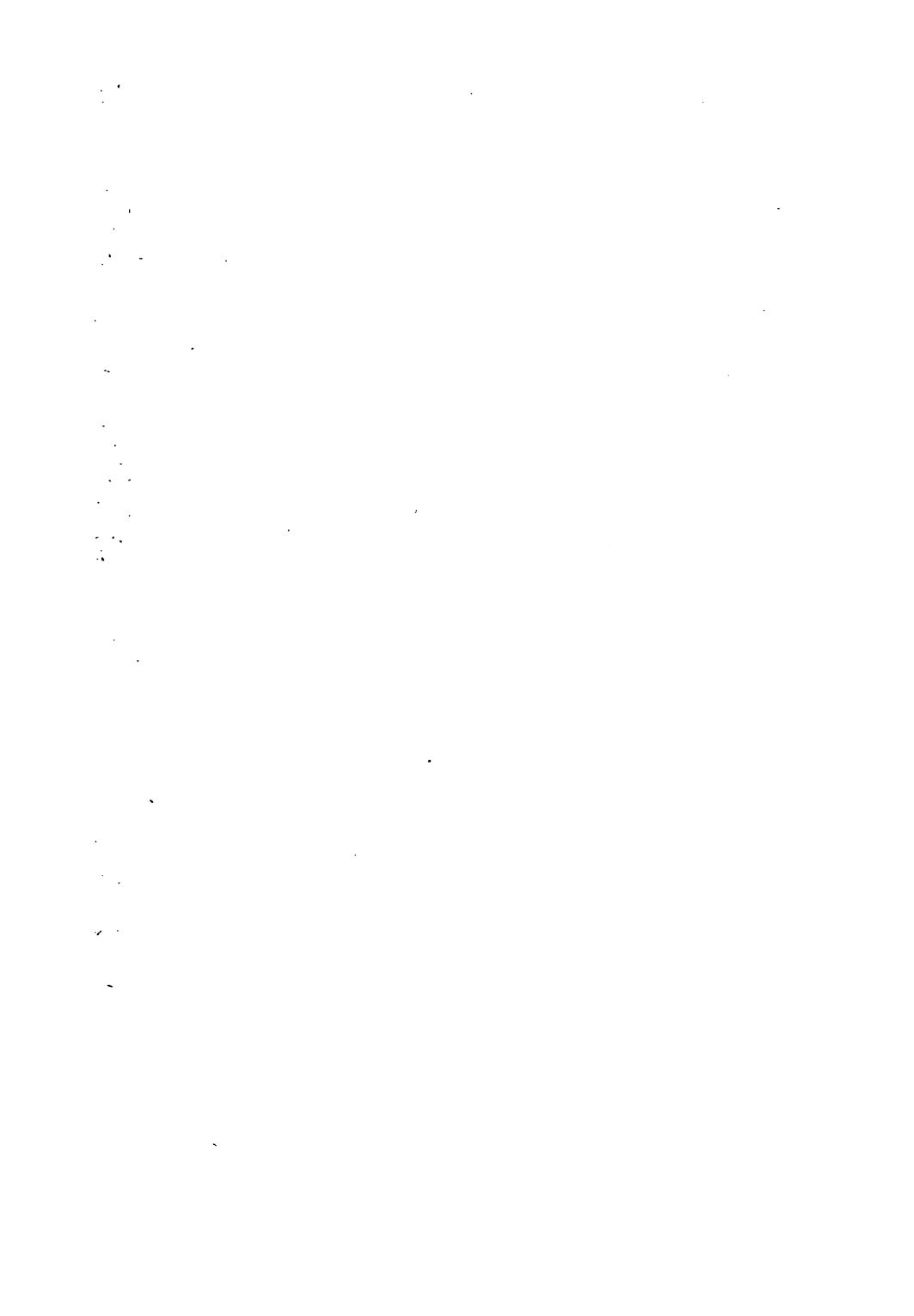
The progress of the Christ-life cannot be learned from creeds, but can be seen in the changes which it has wrought in men and institutions.

The truth about Christ is the fruit of the growth of the Christ-life.

Life must manifest itself. "By their fruits ye shall know them." Wherever there is growth in likeness to the historic Christ there is the Christ-life, whatever the philosophy of the Master or the universe ; and wherever that growth is absent the Christ-life is lacking, even though there be confession, prayer, bread and wine-crowned communion table, baptismal font, hymns, and sacred liturgies.

To do Thy will is more than praise,
As words are less than deeds,
And simple trust can find Thy ways
We miss with chart of creeds.

Our Friend, our Brother, and our Lord,
What may Thy service be ?—
Nor Name, nor form, nor ritual word,
But simply following Thee.



EPILOGUE.

THE growing revelation makes clearer the vision of God—the Father.

It makes more vivid the Eternal Evangel—the message of hope to those who suffer; of salvation to those who sin; and of immortal life to those who face the mystery of death.

It makes more conspicuous the essential meaning of the cross.

It shows that the mission of the individual Christian, and of the Christian Church is to continue Christ's work of personal salvation and of social redemption.

This revelation begins with conscious life, is continued through the media of many experiences, and will grow fuller and brighter so long as man is spiritually receptive.

This revelation is dimly shadowed in the Creeds of Christendom; is clearer in the theology of the people; still clearer in the amelioration of society; equally clear in the exaltation of political ideals; and is slowly but surely working toward its perfect expression in the spiritual development of the world.

In its fulness this revelation will be the realisation in humanity of the life, the teachings, and the sacrifice of the Christ, who is the

perfect revelation of God to man, and of man to himself.

**A sweeter song shall then be heard—
The music of the world's accord
Confessing Christ, the Inward Word.**

**That song shall swell from shore to shore,
One faith, one hope, one love restore
The seamless robe which Jesus wore.**

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